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Teacher perspectives of challenges within the Norwegian Educational system

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This research examines teacher perspectives' of educational challenges in Norway. Norway is one of the most well-resourced, prosperous, social welfare states in the world, yet the OECD (2011) recognized students' weak basic skills and insufficient teacher ability in content and pedagogy, along with engagement and imbalanced resources as points for educational improvement. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to 138 teachers practicing in Norway to explore challenges from their perspective. Teachers reported the following challenges: completing government paperwork with competing pedagogical demands, adapting teaching to each student due to large class sizes, motivating students, managing social and emotional problems of students, and meeting society's increasingly unrealistic expectations. Teachers perceived their challenges to be a result of a poorly built educational system, not from deficits in their teaching skills. We concluded from this study that teacher voice and participation in improvement decisions are needed, given some discrepancy in perceived challenges among these findings, international surveys, and policy-related reports.

Keywords: Norway; educational challenges; teacher perspectives; student outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Norway is one of the wealthiest, most successful social welfare states in the world. The UN Human Development Index positions the country first out of 187 countries/territories (UN, 2014) in the collective dimensions of a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living. It is a politically stable, modern, and highly developed Nordic state ranked second among countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in which people are most satisfied with their lives (2014). Yet, the OECD reports that Norway's educational system is unsatisfactory (2011). Students' weak basic skills and insufficient teacher ability to deliver content and pedagogy, along with need for better engagement and a better balance of resources, are the major points highlighted for educational improvement.

All teachers face challenges, but teachers in Norway face specific challenges: "Many national and international surveys show the Norwegian school faces challenges with regard to both the quality of the teaching and the learning of the pupils" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [The Directorate], 2009, pp. 90-91). The Directorate has recognized challenges relating to administrators and their leadership, educators and their teaching, and students and their learning. Compared to other European

nations, Norway was ranked among the three lowest in terms of decision making at the school level (Midthassel, Bru, & Idsöe, 2000). Findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a comparative study of 23 countries, revealed school leaders in Norway place greater importance on administrative tasks than instructional leadership. Teachers reported school leaders are not very active when it comes to observation of teaching and feedback. Sadly, teachers also reported tolerance for poorly executed, substandard work (Moum, Troan, & Emstad, 2011, p. 198). *The Leadership in Education European Synopsis* asserted that school leaders claim to also be "squeezed between increasing expectations from both the political and bureaucratic level, in addition to a continuously growing load of tasks that the schools are asked to follow up on behalf of society" (Moum et al., 2011, p. 200).

According to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2010), another major challenge is gaps in teachers' pedagogical knowledge; many Norwegian teachers are unqualified in the subjects they teach. The TALIS notes:

> Many Norwegian teachers follow up their pupils less than teachers in most other participating countries. They rarely correct homework and the pupil's workbooks, rarely set clear learning goals and are less likely to follow up the pupils' learning. The teachers leave a lot up to the pupils, but not very many pupil-oriented practices are conducted either, and the pupils are not very often included in the planning of teaching . . . That suggests that many Norwegian teacher have an unclear way of teaching. (The Directorate, 2009, p. 92; Vibe, Evensen, & Hovdhaugen, 2009)

And while the TALIS concluded teacher-student relations were good in Norway, effective teaching practice was not documented. This might be explained by Norwegian teachers' egalitarian training to be more a guide/supervisor (Stephens, Tønnessen, & Kyriacou, 2004) than an authoritarian teacher (Czerniawski, 2009; Kron, 2000). Czerniawski notes the term "friend" is embedded within Norway's framework for teaching documentation. It proved a dominant theme in his 2009 qualitative study on positioning the values of early career teachers in Norway. This "unclear way of teaching" has created tension between the democratic ideal of what being a teacher in Norway should be and what is pragmatically possible as a classroom practitioner (Czerniawki, 2009).

The OECD notes that formative assessment needs to be more firmly embedded in regular teaching practices and competency goals for students are not specific enough to guide teaching and assessment. However, an interesting finding is that Norwegian teachers have the highest self-efficacy according to the TALIS (Vibe et al., 2009), yet they are among those who participate the least in organised academic and professional development. Teachers have expressed strong interest for increased opportunities to improve their qualifications but encounter lack of support and facilitation from school leaders/employers (The Directorate, 2009; Vibe et al., 2009). School leaders "have to deal a lot with economic and staff-related matters, which make some school leaders feel forced to give less priority to pedagogical leadership" (Moum et al., 2011, p. 200). The OECD also found that there is no guarantee teachers would receive appraisal/feedback on their teaching practices. The OECD recommends that teacher appraisal needs to be more closely linked to professional and school development. The conclusion of the OECD is that school leadership could play a stronger role in driving quality improvement for schools.

With these challenges documented by international surveys and policy-related reports, the aim of this paper is to discuss the educational challenges in Norway *based on teacher*

perspectives: What do teachers in Norway actually see as the biggest issue impacting student outcomes? The research described in this study is the voice of teachers in Norway on this question. The paper consists of five parts: this introduction; a discussion of contextual background and conceptual framework; then an explanation of the research methods and results; a discussion of the findings of the study; and, finally, conclusions and recommendations.

NORWAY'S EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Education in Norway is a major mode of social progress, impartiality, and wellbeing. The required schooling up to the lower secondary level (grade 10) is intended to bring together all children regardless of class, gender, and origin (Allmendinger, 1989). Schooling is both centralized and decentralized (Huus, 1960); funding is provided by both the national parliament and local communities under the advisement of the national commission on education and city leaders. The city (i.e., *kommune*) places the task of budgeting into the hands of each individual school rendering the principal (i.e., *rector*) as the authority figure and business manager.

Schools are divided according to grade level. Grades 1 through 7 are considered to be the primary level and grades 8 through 10 the lower secondary level. The upper secondary school system, grades 11-13, is run independently from all other schools by the council for the municipality (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007). At age 16, students apply to upper secondary schools for either a general education path leading to university entrance or a professional path leading to a vocational career (Huang, 2007).

Norwegian class size is regulated: 24 students when there are two cohorts (grade levels) in a class, 28 students when there is one cohort at the primary level (grades 1 to 7), and 30 students when there is one cohort at the lower secondary level (grades 8 to 10) (The Directorate, 1995). Yet, according to the OECD (2010a), the average Norwegian class size for primary schooling is 19.3 pupils, and for lower secondary schooling 22.8 pupils. The ratio of students to teaching staff in educational institutions is 10:8 for primary and 10:1 for lower secondary (OECD, 2010a).

Characteristically, the Norwegian educational system is one that values equality "over and above cultural and academic achievements" (Czerniawski, 2009, p. 425; Tjeldvoll, 2002) with the cultural belief that everyone should be treated the same way (Stephens et al., 2004). Equality is achieved through accessibility and adaptability. All students have access to their local schools while having their education adapted to their unique learning needs (i.e., adaptive teaching). Work plans are developed to manage student learning, and both students and teachers report this has a positive impact on the learning environment and on motivation (The Directorate, 2012, p. 62). Kindergartens are educationally important for children with disabilities. Early intervention is a priority because children with special needs are first to be admitted to kindergarten (ages 1-5), and special needs education is a right if a student does not, or cannot, achieve satisfactory learning (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007). Rates of immigration have increased dramatically, which correlates to the need for more adaptive teaching and more instruction for language minorities (The Directorate, 2009, p. 42). There is also an emphasis on parental involvement in all processes. Ultimately, a student tracking system based on perceived abilities is not favoured (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006, p. 288).

In the *OECD reviews of evaluation and assessment in education: Norway*, Nusche, Earl, Maxwell, and Shewbridge (2011) outlined the main features of the Norwegian teaching profession. Teachers are salaried, public sector employees with pay progressions determined by education level, seniority, and additions for extra responsibilities and achievements. A recent introduction, which has decreased the number of qualified applicants to initial teacher preparation programs, is that, to become a teacher, individuals must meet minimum overall upper secondary grades and minimum grades in Norwegian and mathematics as entrance requirements. There are three main teacher preparation options: the state's four-year general teacher education, a university teacher education program, or a one-year graduate-level program following a degree relevant to teaching (p. 76). There has also been an increased focus on professional development and on improving the status of the teaching profession (p. 77). A new initiative, *Competence for Quality*, was established to create a permanent system for continuing professional development at no cost to teachers. The government has entered into a binding partnership with key stakeholders to improve the status of the teaching profession. The partnership looks to do this through recruiting campaigns, improving the competency of school leaders, better teacher training and improved teacher competence (Nusche et al., 2011, p. 77).

Fundamental areas of teacher competence were outlined for the Norwegian Parliament in the document titled: *The white paper on teacher education "The teacher—the role and education"* (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). This defined the teachers' primary tasks as: "to prepare and guide the pupils' learning process in a systematic manner" (p. 1). Teachers are required to develop a "year plan" denoting the curriculum to be covered each week. For students with special needs, the teachers provide adaptive education, which consists of providing written work plans that adapt instruction to the special needs of the student. Pupils with an immigrant background also receive an adaptive education until they are proficient in Norwegian. For all students, learning outcomes are measured by means of marks (i.e., grades). Teachers must document formative assessment data and marks, and meet once per term with students and their parents to discuss progress.

The national education context in Norway is directed by *The national curriculum for knowledge promotion*, which is an "objective and quality framework for primary and secondary education and training" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007). The foci include: the core curriculum, quality framework, subject curricula, distribution of teaching hours per subject, and individual assessment. National standards are addressed through curricula decided by local schools in order to attain standards for reading and writing set for all European nations. Even though Norway is not a part of the European Union, it is part of the same testing system, where 30 European countries review and compare test results for individual pupils at school and national levels in an effort to learn from each other's experiences (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2009). Many of the underlying reasons for school decision-making in Norway are based on the liberal nature of Norwegian politics and basic differences in cultural structure.

And when it comes to student learning, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reported Norway's results are at or above average depending on the subject. Yet, these outcomes are not considered satisfactory given Norway's annual expense per student is about 45 percent above other participating countries (Nusche et al., 2011; OECD, 2010a). Moreover, dropout rates in upper secondary school is a major concern with "as much as 20-50% of the students within certain studies drop out during

the 3-4 years they are supposed to attend school" (Moum, et al., 2011, p. 198). In a global education economy where international comparison has great public meaning, these concerns are significant when occurring in a country that, by all current measures of success, is expected to have high levels of student performance (Egelund, 2012).

Given this economic and educational context, this paper discusses the challenges faced by Norway's education system from the perspective of individuals engaged in it; that is, from the teachers' perspectives.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To ensure that everyone receives the education he or she is "entitled to," The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training critically examines education in regards to progress on *The national curriculum for the knowledge promotion* (hereafter *Knowledge promotion)*. One element of *Knowledge promotion* includes the *Quality framework*, a description of the system, expectations, beliefs, and desired results of education in Norway (Maxwell, 2005, p. 33). The *Quality framework* includes factors related to quality education: social and cultural competence, student motivation for learning and use of learning strategies, pupil participation in democratic decision-making, adaptive education and equal opportunities, competency of teachers, and cooperation with the home and community.

The education mirror is the annual analysis of the educational system in Norway, which provides facts and information for reference during supervision of schools and making improved decisions regarding key *Knowledge promotion* indicators. Since the 2009 edition was the last published prior to collecting data for this study, it served to inform the research design. It drove the exploration of how a resource-rich system can face the identified and considerable challenges.

The results from *The education mirror 2009* analysis were presented using the following categories: facts about primary and secondary education and training, resources, learning outcomes, the learning environment, recruitment, completion and competence achievement in upper secondary education and training, and quality improvement of teachers and school leaders (The Directorate, 2009). Within these categories, The Directorate detailed the current status of the system, identifying both strengths and challenges. What guided this study was the numerous challenges identified (see Appendix) given the noted discrepancy in Norway's high resource allocations to education and comparatively low outcomes of student performance. While The Directorate, international organizations, and comparative surveys provided vital information about educational progress, *teachers' opinions* of strengths and challenges have not been explicitly studied. As such, this qualitative study provides an exploratory investigation from this vital perspective.

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study consisted 138 teachers actively teaching in Norway during the 2011-2012 school year. Of the 138 participants, 68 were male and 162 female; 12 percent had been teaching for 0-2 years, 18 percent for 3-6 years, 18 percent for 7-10 years, 38

percent for 11-15 years, and 50 percent for 16 or more years. Teachers represented 13 out of 19 administrative districts (i.e., *fylke*) within Norway, from the sparsely populated areas of the Arctic Circle to the heavily populated areas around major cities. Participants were from 25 primary and lower secondary levels. The teachers represented 68 percent of all schools visited during one academic-year by the first author who was a scholar in the US-Norway Fulbright Foundation's Roving Scholar Program, a distinct, cross-cultural exchange opportunity. The program brings American teachers to Norway for one academic year to travel throughout the country giving presentations, seminars, and lectures to teachers and students, and to share a sense of the American teaching experience. The Roving Scholar directly contacted all schools with previous visits, from a list compiled in the preceding 24 years of the program. Schools could also request a visit directly from the Fulbright organization or the The Norwegian Centre for Foreign Languages in Education (i.e., *Fremmedspråksenteret*). Through each school's contact person (either a lead teacher or administrator), all schools visited were asked to participate in the study. Not all schools replied in the affirmative. Those who agreed to participate were provided with the purpose of the research, and it was clarified that participation was independent of both the Fulbright program and the Norwegian government. The position of Roving Scholar granted unique access to many areas of the country.

Research question and data collection

One central question was investigated in this study using an open-ended questionnaire format. This method was founded on Creswell's (2007) recommendation that researchers should "state the broadest questions they could possibly pose about the research problem" (p. 108). The question read: *What is the biggest issue facing teachers in Norway today?* This central question was designed to ascertain teachers' perceptions, as well as to offer additional insight. The question was left open and broad for a number of reasons: to encourage critical thinking, to elicit unbiased and unlimited opinions of the respondents, and explore responses perhaps not considered by the researchers nor found in literature review. As Creswell (2007) reflected, an open-ended question is asked to provide an opportunity to listen to the participants and to resist making assumptions about the best questions to ask from the role of "expert researcher" (p. 43). This allowed for the suspension of judgment and pre-suppositions until results could form a foundation for analysis and connection to other studies (p. 58). For translation into Norwegian from English, word selection, clarity, and intention were analysed to reflect the intricate nature of words and their meanings within a language; the question was offered in either language.

Data were collected from September 2011 to May 2012. To account for cultural variables and approaches to work, the questionnaire was explained and distributed in person, both in English and Norwegian, at each school by either the first author or the contact teacher. The method by which schools decided to disseminate the questionnaire varied from school to school, which fitted with the Norwegian system of great local autonomy in decision making (Moum et al., 2011). At some schools, the principal directed the voluntary completion; at others, the contact teacher addressed the whole school; and at yet other schools, only the languages department completed the questionnaire. Sometimes, the author was given time to formally address all teachers within a planning meeting, or simply through discussions during breaks. Some questionnaires were collected immediately after completion with the author present in the school building; others were returned by mail or email giving participants more completion time. Where this occurred, follow-up emails to

contact teachers were sent approximately three weeks following distribution. No incentives were provided for completing the questionnaire, but discussions were held about the opportunity to examine the results. An acceptable response rate of 60 percent was achieved.

Data analysis

The open-ended question was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis as a guideline because their process places meaning and understanding at the root of analysis. The process promotes discursive interpretation of data because individual codes may cross-reference multiple themes. Braun and Clarke explain how this approach is utilized to report experience, meaning, and the reality perceived by participants without limiting interpretation to themes supported by a pre-determined, potentially irrelevant, theory. Data analysis began with a classification procedure known as open coding. Through constant comparison and reconceptualization, codes were then analysed using a pattern coding method, called categorization, to identify *categories* from relationships amongst codes. Next, a search for patterns among these categories was employed to identify *themes*.

For the purpose of validation, data were first analysed by a colleague who: (a) had never travelled to Norway, (b) had no affiliation with Norway's educational system, nor (c) had any form of contact with the study's participants. This strategy was employed to ensure the words/perspectives of teachers were objectively analysed by reducing any bias of the author, who had lived in Norway for one year and had worked with these teachers. Next, the author conducted an audit of the findings for consensual verification to validate the trustworthiness of the findings within the cultural context. Lastly, the findings were validated through a process known as member checking. Twenty-five participants (i.e., members) identified as the school contact person were sent an electronic form of the analytic scheme (see Table 1). On the form, participants were to select *Yes* if they determined the results accurately represented teachers' challenges in the Norwegian educational system, or *No* if they found inaccuracies. If *No*, they were asked to explain specifically what they felt was inaccurate and why. No pattern of inaccuracies was identified.

RESULTS

Teachers were to identify and explain the *biggest issue facing teachers in Norway today*. This open-ended question was qualitatively analysed to determine categories and themes. Findings included four categories and fives themes (see Table 1).

Table 1: The biggest issue facing teachers in Norway today

Analytic Schema
Category 1; Temporal challenges
Theme 1: Governmental imposition of documenting "everything" has increased the amount of paperwork, ultimately making the teaching profession more clerical than pedagogical.
Category 2: Instructional challenges
Theme 2: Due to limited financial resources, class sizes are large; consequently adaptive teaching is difficult.

Category 3: Behavioural challenges

Theme 3: Motivating students is difficult due to their low work ethic and limited connection to real-life application.

Theme 4: Teachers are challenged with managing the increasing social and emotional problems of students, which are affecting the learning environment.

Category 4 Societal challenges

Theme 5: Societal changes have lowered the status of teachers while producing increased, unrealistic expectations; consequently, this is affecting recruitment of competent teachers.

Category 1: Temporal challenges

Theme 1

Government requirements to document "everything" has increased the amount of paperwork; ultimately, making the teaching profession more clerical than pedagogical. "Bureaucracy," "office work," and "secretary job" were how some teachers (60%) described the government requirement to document "everything." One teacher identified "defend[ing] the year plan" as a specific paperwork challenge, whereas, most of the teachers responded with generalities. With this paperwork expectation, teachers (45%) felt their workloads have not only increased, but are "not directly related to teaching." Teachers are challenged with finding the "time" to implement the pedagogical practices central to planning, teaching, and reflecting. Beyond this, several teachers (25%) were concerned with limited opportunities for collaboration "to research courses together" because of "too little time." Ultimately, this "bureaucratization of the profession" has taken "time from direct contact with students" and from "time to prepare so that the teaching is of higher quality."

Category 2: Instructional challenges

Theme 2

Due to limited financial resources, class sizes are large; consequently, adaptive teaching is difficult. Adaptive teaching in Norway is a practice of differentiating instruction to meet all students' individual needs. Such teaching is difficult due to the temporal challenges delineated above, but also because of "large" class sizes. However, teachers in this study did not quantify their perception of "large." Several teachers (45%) noted the "economy" as the causation of large classes because schools had limited finances to increase human resources. Some teachers (10%) remarked it was even "difficult to 'see' all the students." More importantly, large class sizes resulted in "large differences in skills" which made it challenging to individualize lessons for all students and to follow up with each of them and, according to the teachers, this was especially difficult when time for planning and collaboration had been compromised.

Category 3: Behavioural challenges

Theme 3

Motivating students is difficult due to their low work ethic and limited connection to real-life application. Interestingly, some teachers (30%) attributed students' low work ethic to Norway being a "nanny state and [having] an excellent welfare system" as well as to students being too "laid back." One teacher used "laissez faire" while another teacher suggested students are "spoilt" because they demand without taking any responsibility. Some teachers (25%) also attributed students' lack of motivation to not understanding the relevancy between curriculum and real-life application. Teachers asserted students are not able to "see a use of education," and they possess a "lack of need to succeed to make their own future." Effectually, students' lack of motivation is an impediment for students to "receive teaching" in order for them to do "well in school." Seventy-five percent of teachers expressed considerable concern about students' motivation.

Theme 4

Teachers are challenged with managing the increasing social and emotional problems of students, which are affecting the learning environment. Teachers expressed concern with students' increasing mental health/psychological issues, personal issues, and social behaviours. Teachers perceived the classroom environment becoming more "turbulent" which "weakens the professional performance" largely because learning is interrupted. Teachers (40%) questioned the appropriateness of managing behaviours "rather than teaching," especially when a few teachers perceived this to be the responsibility of parents and psychologists. One teacher connected the increase in students' behavioural problems to not having "enough time and resources to make a good class environment with calm[ness], order, and respect and a wish to learn something that stands in focus."

Category 4 Societal challenges

Theme 5

Societal changes have lowered the status of teachers while producing increased, unrealistic expectations; consequently, this is affecting recruitment of competent candidates to the field. Many of the teachers believed that public perception of teachers has changed in Norway. First, some teachers' (35%) perceptions were that there is "little respect for the work we do," and "the line of work has a lower status than before, and to be perceived as more of a service profession." In support of this, some teachers (30%) identified low salary as the cause of this recruitment issue. Moreover, some teachers (30%) reported that "demands" and "problems" in society are increasing expectations on schools to "fix" them. Interestingly, one teacher wrote, "We are not trusted as a group. Teachers get a lot of negative media attention." The causal relationship to this lowered status is "low qualified applicants [applying] for new positions." Unfortunately, many teachers (55%) believed this societal challenge was compromising a quality education for students. The majority (85%) of teachers stated they were fulfilling their professional responsibilities by trying to engage in pedagogically sound practices (e.g., lesson planning, collaborating, reflecting, researching).

DISCUSSION

Norway has a long tradition of broad local freedom. Although local control remains on *how* to reach the learning goals of the national curriculum, government accountability (measured by the national test system and expected documentation of *how* goals are going to be met) have seemingly made the profession more clerical than pedagogical according to teachers in this current study. A major challenge for schools and teachers has been the increased tightening of control and accountability from public governance (Moum et al., 2011), which may be due to many national and international surveys indicating challenges with quality teaching and learning (The Directorate, 2009). The major implication for increased paperwork has been reduced time on pedagogical tasks. Teachers identified the following manifestations of having reduced time: ill-prepared lessons, reduced time with students, no time for collaboration with colleagues, and limited engagement in reflection and research.

Another implication resulting from increased paperwork was that teachers felt their workload had increased. Justifiably, they noted an increase in new tasks without the removal of older ones. Teachers felt this resulted in too many classes to teach and too many job assignments not related to teaching. Some teachers noted that their increasing job responsibilities were disproportionate to the amount they were paid. On the other hand, *The education mirror* (2009) illustrated how Norwegian teachers' planned teaching time was lower than the average for other OECD countries.

The majority of teachers in this study found it challenging to implement adaptive teaching due to large class sizes comprising varying ability levels, which is a result of limited financial resources. However, the average class size is well under the national requirement (OECD, 2010a) and has remained almost unchanged (The Directorate, 2013). Comparatively, national data do not support the perception that class sizes are too large. So, are teachers' expectations realistic, or are there other confounding variables influencing their perceptions? A variable to consider is the number of students receiving special needs education because, although the number of students has not increased, the learner characteristics have changed. The Directorate (2009) reported that the number of students with special needs has increased, along with the immigrant population, and that teachers need more competence on how to teach those with special needs. These diverse learner groups have a right to an adaptive education that is more individualized, thus requiring increased time for planning and teaching.

Another challenge teachers identified in this study was students' lack of motivation due to a pattern of low work ethic and limited connections to real-life. Teachers reported the causation of this is a result of student choice and not a result of non-motivational teaching practices. However, the Pupil Survey 2011, given to pupils in the primary and lower secondary schools every spring since 2002, showed the pupils are satisfied with their teachers, have inner motivation, and put forth effort (The Directorate, 2012). When comparing findings from the pupil survey to those in this study, a dichotomous relationship exists between teachers' and students' perceptions of motivation displayed in the classroom. Inarguably, motivation must be considered with student motivation gradually declining between grades 5-10 (Nusche et al., 2011), with dropout rates as high as 50 percent (Moum et al., 2011), and with the OECD review team recommending Norway offer a relevant curriculum that gives some flexibility and choice (Nusche et al., 2011). Remarkably, teachers in this study did not correlate a perceived lack of motivation from

students with students not receiving adequate differentiation through adaptive teaching. One could hypothesize that there is a causal relationship between these two variables.

In *The education mirror* (2009), the Norwegian Directorate concluded: "It appears that school leaders put the most emphasis on classroom management, pupil discipline, pupil conduct, and the relationship between teachers and pupils as criteria for assessment" (p. 92). Contrary to the good teacher-student relations and school leaders' emphasis on behaviour management, teachers in this present study were challenged with managing the increasing social and emotional problems of students. They perceived this problem to be so severe it was affecting the learning environment. Norwegian researchers have also found emotional and behavioural problems to be on the rise (Ogden, Hagen, Askeland, & Christensen, 2009; Stephens, Kyriacou, & Tønnessen, 2005).

Noteworthy is how teachers perceived instruction to have been compromised due to increased workloads and larger class sizes, yet they made no correlation to how students' behaviours were affected by ill-prepared lessons and reduced student-teacher interaction. The OECD (2010a) cites studies illustrating how, in Norway: (a) students do not receive adequate academic challenges; (b) teachers may be relatively indulgent in that they provide generous praise but little critical academic response to students; and (c) Norwegian teachers applied structured teaching practices to a lesser degree than most other countries. Research supports that when students experience academic success, behavioural challenges are typically reduced; Jacob Kounin (1970) titled this consistent association *instructional management*. Interestingly, The Directorate (2012) embraced Kounin's concept of class management to "reduce disturbances in the learning effort" (p. 58). According to Marzano, Marzano and Pickering (2003), students in classrooms with the most effective teachers gain about 52 percentile points in their achievement while students with the least effective gained only 14 percentile points (p. 2). Effective teaching, he asserts, involves a teacher's instructional strategies and their uses, classroom curricular design, and classroom management. In addition to teacher effectiveness, student motivation is equally critical to classroom management and academic achievement. Skinner and Belmont (1993) investigated motivation in the classroom and found reciprocal effects of teacher behaviour and student engagement; meaning, teacher behaviour influences student engagement and student engagement influences teacher behaviour.

The final challenge identified by teachers relates to the negative perceptions and demands from society. In this study, teachers' perceptions were that society placed unrealistic expectations on them. Perhaps this is due to Norwegian teachers generally being viewed as trusted professionals among different stakeholders (OECD, 2011); conversely, teachers in this study did not feel trusted. Teachers also expressed concern about the lowered status of teachers and its impact on recruitment. A report for the Nordic Council of Ministries in 2009, confirmed the declining status of teachers in society and the difficulties of attracting young people to education, largely due to the lack of good role models, negative media attention, and low salaries (The Directorate, 2009). Teachers in this study did not identify a declining morale nor decreasing motivation in spite of the aforementioned challenges. Although teachers' perceptions are not necessarily reality, one might question how morale and motivation can prevail in working condition with unrealistic demands, hard-to-manage student population, disproportionate compensation, and loss of professional prestige.

CONCLUSION

We conclude from this study that Norwegian teachers perceive their challenges to be a result of a poorly built educational *system* largely due to limited resources (i.e., time and money). However, the societal challenge is the only one strongly supported by international and national data; the temporal, instructional, and behavioural challenges are conflicting. Evidentially, Norway's educational resources are adequate, if not substantial, so this is perhaps not the underlying issue. What may be disguising itself as a resource issue, however, is a growing teaching staff with limited qualifications. The Directorate (2009) reported that the percentage of teaching staff without a teaching degree had almost doubled; hence these teachers may have "substantial professional competence, but lack teaching qualifications" (p. 37). Without specialized training in the art and science of teaching (i.e., pedagogy), these teachers are undoubtedly challenged by a student population that is becoming more diverse with students who have special needs and those who are from an immigrant background. If teachers' primary task is to "prepare and guide the pupils' learning process in a systematic manner" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009, p. 1), how are teachers producing high quality instruction when they are, albeit competent, not qualified to teach? Potentially, this is the leading factor in Norway's less than satisfactory student outcomes.

Limitations of study and recommendations for future research

This study's purpose to ascertain the biggest issues/challenges facing teachers in Norway today, based on teachers' self-reports, is not meant to be representative of the national teaching workforce nor the administrative districts (i.e., *fylke*) embodied, rather central to the small sample of 138 teachers. However, this qualitative and interpretive small-scale study is revealing in that it recognizes the social reality of teachers working within the confines of both national and local contexts. Another limitation is that the sample represents only the teachers who participated in the US-Norway Fulbright Foundation's Roving Scholar Program. Only schools involved in the program were solicited as participants (www.fulbright.no).

A recommendation for future research is to conduct a qualitative inquiry using individual interviews and focus groups to query teachers further about the implications of these temporal, instructional, student, and societal challenges as well as their recommendations for overcoming them. Further, a quantitative analysis that correlates these four challenges would be beneficial to understand causal relations between and among them, especially how lower quality instruction affects student motivation and behaviour.

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APPENDIX

The Education Mirror 2009: Challenges

Category	Challenge
Facts	Large schools increasing, small schools decreasing Schools closing due to low numbers of pupils, poor economy and improved use of resources Problems recruiting teachers to rural areas % of pupils with special needs education and % of time spent on SNE increases Number of immigrant students who need adaptations until proficient in Norwegian has increased by 80% % of teachers without teacher training has increased Many teachers and leaders near retirement
Resources	Pupils have substantially fewer teaching hours than other countries Great variation among municipalities in the expenditure per pupil Percentage of teaching staff who do not have an approved degree has almost doubled Vocational programs are more expensive Great variation in how teachers spend their time on academics & non-academics within & among schools Planned teaching time is lower than the average in other OECD countries
Learning Outcomes	Poor competencies in math; a consistent and steady decline since 1990s, signs of improvement Wide range of skills demonstrated on math tests between weak and strong pupils Poorer math test results for pupils in the smaller municipalities Homework rarely followed up by the teacher
Learning Environment	Under half of schools have developed written routines for investigation and notification of bullying
Upper Secondary	Low completion percentages; higher completion rate for general studies than for vocational Relatively common that pupils and apprentices to drop out of their education and disappear from the education system at times

Quality Improvement	Recruitment to leadership positions is weak
	Quality of the teaching & quality of the learning of the pupils
	Teachers are among those who participate the least in organized professional development
	Competence needs related to teaching pupils with special needs, ICT skills and assessment practices
	Teachers experience a lack of support and facilitation from the school for professional development
	Very few specific & formal measures are taken for induction of new teachers
	Greater importance from the school leaders on administration rather than instructional leadership
	Teachers follow up with their pupils less than in other TALIS participating countries
	Teachers rarely correct homework or set learning goals
	Teachers leave a lot up to the pupils but do not conduct many pupil-oriented practices
	Pupils are not very often included in the planning of the teaching
	Norwegian teachers have an unclear way of teaching
	Substandard work is tolerated by the collegium of the school
	Little teacher collaboration is to promote academic improvement or for reflection/ improvement practice
	Knowledge and use of tools for local external & internal assessment is relatively weak in the system
	There is need for competency building of teachers
	Teachers have insufficient specialization
	Modification of the teaching and a change in the role of the teacher might appear to be contributing causes of the big decline in pupil performance
	Teachers making students responsible for their own learning
	Declining status of teachers in society
	Difficult to attract young people into education
	Pay stands out as the most important reason why young people do not choose teacher training
	Lack of good teachers as role models
	Negative media publicity

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Third space strategists: International students negotiating the transition from pathway program to postgraduate coursework degree

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Pathway programs exist to prepare students for progression into university degrees but the transition experience for many students may not be as smooth as is suggested by the notion of the pathway. While attending a pathway program and at the beginning of their university degree, students may be in a third space, a liminal space where they engage in a complex process of becoming. They are required to negotiate a world shaped by different, and often conflicting discourses. In this productive space, identities can be explored and interrogated providing the potential for cultural adaptation and exchange. Using the "third space" to understand the student experience of transition, this paper examines interview responses from a group of postgraduate coursework international students as they complete a pathway program and begin to study in a degree program. Participants are found to be third space strategists as they translate their previous ways of learning, collaborate with other students, and reflect on their English language development. In some ways, these students demonstrate a better understanding of the cultural process of adjustment than the institution in which they study. These insights from students can inform curriculum design both in pathway and disciplinary contexts leading to the development of more relevant orientation and teaching programs.

Keywords: university preparation programs; pathway programs; Identity; Transition; International students

INTRODUCTION

Many international students enter Australian higher education by first being directed to or voluntarily undertaking a preparatory program in a pathway college. This arrangement suits universities as they can provide applicants who do not meet their criteria for admission with an alternative entry pathway. Often, incentives are offered to students, such as direct entry to programs of study, without the need for additional English language testing. However, while there is usually some monitoring of pathway institutions by the universities they are connected to, there has been limited research into the experiences of graduates from pathway programs. Research on international student experience has tended to focus on their difference from a perceived norm, obscuring the complexity of issues around their adaptation to study in Australian higher education. This limits our understanding of how to build reciprocity with students and improve our ability to provide quality transition experiences that enable them to achieve their goals for international study.

Questions remain around issues of student adaptation and adjustment to an unfamiliar higher education culture. How do they see themselves as individuals and as part of the collective: international students? To what extent are they able to exercise agency as they adapt to a different higher education context? To what extent are they limited by negative discourses that exist? This paper examines these questions, viewing pathway program graduates through the lens of the third space (Bhabha, 2004). After a review of the relevant literature, I examine the experiences of a group of students who transition to a postgraduate coursework degree to ascertain to what extent their transition can be considered to be taking place in a third space. I conclude that international students are variously able to adapt to and influence the institutional discourses they encounter as they make sense of their transition to the higher education context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceptions of international students

Studies of student experiences of higher education tend to characterize international students as a group different from local students and staff. Their learning backgrounds are often assumed to be different and they are expected to struggle (Sawir, 2005). Students are sometimes assumed to be in Australia solely for the immigration potential offered by university courses, and to lack interest in developing English language skills (Birrell, 2006). In classrooms, they are assumed to be passive and unwilling to contribute to discussions (Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Tange & Jensen, 2012; Yates & Nguyen, 2012). Institutional discourses often frame international students in terms of their financial benefit to the institution or their contribution to skills shortages in the wider society (Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2009). These perceptions of international students tend to construct them as a homogenous group, positioning them as lacking in a range of requirements for higher education. International students studying in a new cultural environment must negotiate these different discourses, which both produce and constrain their interactions. These "frameworks of meaning" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 112) construct roles and relationships for individuals and, on a broader scale, shape interactions within the university.

More nuanced understandings exist of international students as subjects who have agency and possess a level of control over their lives in the institution (Anderson, 2013; Madge et al., 2009). The experiences of international students as they transition to university often focus on student identity (English, 2005; Rizvi, 2000; Singh & Doherty, 2008). Implicit in these approaches is the assumption that, through daily interactions, individuals develop their culture and that culture is not something already formed that they carry with them. This process of cultural becoming for international students has been described as requiring engagement with "multiple literacies and discourses" (Lawrence, 2005, p. 243), and could be more fully documented by examining how particular cohorts handle the various transitions required as they study in the Australian higher education context.

Pathway programs

Pathway programs offered to international students introduce the practices and protocols of higher education disciplines and aim to contribute to students' success in higher education in a new cultural context. However, the generic nature of pathway programs suggests that they may provide only a limited idea of what it is like to study in higher

education. According to Harper, Prentice, and Wilson (2011), pathway programs may "promise" rather than "enable" success. A focus on English language in these programs is a starting point rather than an ideal preparation for further development of language within the disciplinary context. The differences between the two learning spaces—pathway and degree program—suggest that transition between them, for many students, may not be completely free of obstacles. This is not least because students are transitioning between quite different institutions. Pathway providers of English language are situated in the ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) sector, which is focused on developing students' English language and academic skills. In the university, there is an emphasis on disciplinary knowledge, often accompanied by an expectation that students will already possess the linguistic and academic skills required for success. There are also differences in the modes of delivery in each of these institutional locations (Benzie, 2011).

TRANSITIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Studies of transitions to higher education have tended to group different cohorts as one without referring to the finer detail of how, for different individuals, experiences may vary within a group. Studies are focused on groups such as "international" students and local students (Prescott & Hellsten, 2005), or problematize students rather than the institution (Sawir, 2005). The literature of transition also tends to focus on undergraduates as those requiring the most assistance through the transition to university (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010). The specific transition experiences of postgraduate students who are commencing higher education in a new country may share aspects in common with undergraduates. However, because these, often more mature students, are adjusting to a new learning culture and, often, a new discipline, they may have different issues to deal with. Additionally, there is growing realization that adaptation to the new culture does not necessarily take place at one time but may be a process of more or less continual transition throughout the course of study (Ecclestone, Biesta, & Hughes, 2010).

THIRD SPACE AND IDENTITY

The notion of third space has been used to understand "sociality as interstitiality" (Gilbert, 2001, p. 101), considering social life as operating in a hybrid context. Applying this to international students sees them as in an in-between space, having completed study in their home countries and not yet fully inducted into an Australian higher education institution.

Bhabha's (1990, 2004) spatial theories of third level "lived" or heavily acculturated experiential space derive from Lefebvre's (1991) and Soja's (1996) work on the spatial imagination. His focus on intercultural interaction can be used to explore cultural difference in many different settings. Bhabha's notion of the hybridity of the collective within the third space helps to explain how those in an intercultural space negotiate, what are often contradictory demands of their lives (Khan, 1998, p. 464). Considering interactions as taking place in a third space provides a way of dealing with the homogenizing tendency of an us-versus-them approach which shuts down the potential for individual agency.

Bhabha's ideas of third space have been employed in a range of intercultural situations, but most often with immigrants (Khan, 1998) or international workers (English, 2005) In education, third space has been deployed as a means of understanding the cultural space that learners inhabit, both in the language education classroom and, more generally, in higher education (Bretag, 2006; Kramsch, 1999, 2006; Leask, 2004; Liddicoat, Crozet, & LoBianco, 1999). Different interpretations of this cultural third space exist. For example Moje et al. (2004) are interested in how teachers can create a third space in their classrooms which leaves the way open for change, suggesting that it is possible to create a third space as a desirable environment for learning. Kramsch (1999) however, argues instead that an abstract third space already exists in intercultural interactions. She considers that "the intrinsic contradictions of meaning and identity in discourse are precisely what might constitute the in-between space that we call inter- or cross-cultural" (Kramsch, 1999, p. 48). These discussions of the third space as a contradictory and ambivalent space can be enriched by further examining the experiences of particular cohorts of students as they engage with transitions in higher education.

METHOD

This study aims to gain insights into the experiences of a group of international students who are negotiating a transitional third space. It reports on data generated in a larger study of the transition experiences of a group of 11 international students as they entered an Australian university. The sample consists of all students from one cohort who succeeded in a preparatory program at a pathway college (the pathway program) and entered the postgraduate coursework degree in commerce (the degree program). The group composition was typical of most intakes, with a predominance of students from China. Details of participants, including their study background and country of origin, are provided in Table 1.

Individual interviews were selected as the best means of understanding each participant's experience because they allowed a glimpse of the participant's own perspective (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Participants were interviewed on two occasions: first, as they completed studying English language and academic skills in the pathway program; and, second, 6 to 10 weeks later after they had been studying in the degree program for 5 weeks. This focus on a period when there was most change for students aimed to capture raw experiences of transition as they were taking place. Interviews were intended to take account of cultural difference within commencing students' experiences of transition into higher education and were conducted with an awareness of the need to counter deficit approaches that contribute to the othering of the international student (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000).

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed, drawing on Bhabha's (2004) concept of third space, to examine to what extent participants demonstrate strategies of resistance, especially to the more negative discourses circulating within—and about—their transitions from studying in their home countries, via a pathway college to Australian higher education. English (2005) uses the term "third space practitioners" to describe the participants in a study of women working as educators in "developing" countries. She highlights the political strategies these women used to subvert the stereotypes through which they were perceived. In a similar vein but using "strategist" rather than practitioner to indicate a more partial role, I propose that some participants in this study are able to resist the "otherness" implicit in those subject positions to which international students

are often relegated by academic discourses. The analysis is concerned with the third space as an abstract, intercultural space where interactions take place between staff and students, and between students and students. Interactions within the wider community are also included in this space. It is a political space, described by Bhabha (2004, p. 56) as infused with power relations, and it is this "in-between space . . . that carries the burden of the meaning of culture". It is a space in which students negotiate their identities (Kenway & Bullen, 2003) as they adjust to a new cultural experience: studying in higher education.

Table 1. Participants' country of origin, education background and work experience

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Previous study	Previous employment
Donna	China	Bachelor degree	-
Vijay	India	Masters degree (Accounting)	Lecturer Education agent
Pearl	China	Bachelor degree (Law)	-
Kanan	India	Bachelor degree (Commerce) (in English)	-
Beryl	China	Bachelor degree (Civil and Commercial Law)	Law
Skye	China	Bachelor degree (Public Administration)	?
Judy	China	Bachelor degree (Journalism) (In English) Travel guide	Travel guide
Clark	China	Bachelor degree (Engineering management)	Building company Pub in Ireland
Chris	China	Bachelor degree (Management) (in English)	Building company
Faith	China	No Bachelor degree	Accountant
Kazuo	Japan	Bachelor degree (Accounting)	Accountant

Contradictions in the thoughts and experiences of research participants may reveal the extent to which they claim third space identities in the context of the academic experience. Some individuals may see advantage in accommodating the identities available to them—at least to the extent that they are able. This choice can be explained as students being willing to go along with the limited identity positions the institution defines for them (Doherty & Singh, 2007, p. 129).

RESULTS

Analysis of interviews reveals a range of ways in which participants demonstrate their capacities as third space strategists as they begin to experience the Australian academic environment. There is heterogeneity within the participant group, as they show "pragmatism, resistance, ambivalence, reinvention, affirmation, and solidarity" (Kenway & Bullen, 2003, p. 10). The analysis reveals the participants to be translating and rethinking their principles (Bhabha 1990, p. 216). They also demonstrate "affective solidarity" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 329)—a kind of mutual support—as they seek to make sense of their lives among and between instances of difference. These third space strategies provide a framework for the following discussion.

Translating, rethinking, and extending their principles

One way in which participants "enact their hybridity" (English, 2005, p. 87) during the transition to a new academic culture is by showing awareness of changes in the way they are thinking or acting since beginning to study in Australia. This act of translating their principles to match the new context, rethinking and extending their previous ways of acting or interacting, is most obvious in the reports from two of the study participants, Donna and Vijay. In different ways, they show how they are attempting to translate their previous experiences of learning to accommodate the current learning context.

Becoming more engaged

By the time of the second interview, Donna is already making use of her experiences to rethink her original, more pragmatic, reasons for studying in Australia. She says:

> Um before I study I just want to mm get a degree but now I, I want to study, study hard because I found this really important and really useful . . . and before I study the class I er I didn't want to become a—accountant or work some at accounting, but now I . . . want to work some . . . at accounting. (Donna interview 2).

Unlike most other participants, Donna does not have a background in accounting and is apparently using the degree program pragmatically, as a path to gaining permanent residence in Australia. Reflecting that, against expectations, she is interested in the course, she explains how she would now like to work as an accountant in Australia, and so commits herself to the task ahead. She displays hybridity, which Bhabha emphasizes "is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 216). Donna, perhaps because she has realized that the goal, "get a degree", also requires hard work, extends her original goal and blends it with a new one, "become [an] accountant", thus creating a new understanding of her place as an international student.

Freedom constrained

In the second interview, Vijay also indicates that he has had to rethink the way he interacts in the classroom. Despite feeling intimidated by a larger class than in the pathway program, he still asks questions of the lecturer, but he says: "it is not too free".

Vijay	Er, really I'd say something ah like fear . . . of Australia, I don't know
Int.	because of the unknown things?
Vijay	Yeah Because of the unknown thing with my classes, I've got to go there yeah that's a different feeling than my previous journey years ago . . . the class each one is different in Australia, a huge class . . . and, yeah, sometimes you know in [pathway course] I've been free ready to ask any question lecturer. I do here, but it's not too free here, yeah, sometimes lecturers say, "Oh, I'll do a later", so—
Int.	Oh, so they deflect your questions?
Vijay	Yeah, "Oh, I'll do that later". OK sir [laugh]

(Vijay interview 2).

Vijay has found that the approach to learning differs from his expectations, but does not yet appear to have made the kinds of changes that Donna is implementing. In the past, for

him, being a student involved predictable activities such as receiving information, asking questions and processing the answers. This approach may have succeeded in the pathway program, where his experiences of study in Accounting and English, and employment as a lecturer and education agent, would all have enabled him to contribute confidently to class discussions. He finds the degree program somewhat different. There are many unknowns, and his freedom to ask questions has been curtailed. His mention of *fear* in the first line of the extract above suggests that he asks questions of the lecturer with more trepidation than in the past. However, it is not so much that he feels unable to ask the questions in a bigger group, "a huge class", as that the lecturer refuses to answer the question, deferring the answer to another time.

Vijay has, it seems, contravened one of the cultural rules that define what is acceptable in the degree program. Only certain types of questions—those which are about the current topic, or those immediately relevant to all students—are acceptable in a large class, so the lecturer defers an answer to Vijay's question. The question may have contravened an "implicit rule" about what is relevant, normal, and valued, and who has the right to engage a particular strand of discourse (Donald, 1992, p. 46). It is also possible that Vijay's question anticipates material that will be covered later in the course. Having already gained a Master's degree in Commerce from India, he may be more familiar with the course content than other students in the class. This is also supported in Vijay's initial outburst in the second interview when he vehemently protests that knowledge is not being taught in the course:

Vijay	it's really not because I, I feel lost too much here in the uni that, that really don't give you the knowledge of the subject. They want to just finish the, your postgraduations.
Int.	What do they want to do, sorry?
Vijay	They just want to finish your Master degree. They don't want to give you a proper knowledge I think

It appears that he has not yet understood the approach to study that is expected. His protest that "they don't really give you the knowledge of the subject" signals his expectation that the course be taught in ways more aligned with his experience. He has yet to make the kinds of adjustment expected of an international student. He expects to be explicitly taught content knowledge while the information in seminars seems limited to processes.

These extracts show how two different individuals bring to the third space of transition assumptions and approaches acquired in earlier learning situations. At this early stage of their postgraduate study, each negotiates the academic culture with a different level of acceptance. Donna seems willing to readjust her ways of thinking but Vijay, whose background suggests he may have more to lose, is holding on to his preconceived notion of what it is like to be a student in Australian higher education.

Demonstrating "affiliative solidarity"

Bhabha's notion of affiliative solidarity is relevant to the transition experience of the participants in this study. That is, they appear to gain some reassurance and agency in a sense of group solidarity, formed through the relationships they developed with each other during the pathway program and transition to the degree program. Bhabha (2004) describes affiliative solidarity as:

> formed through the ambivalent articulations of the realm of the aesthetic, the fantasmatic, the economic and the body political: a temporality of social construction and contradiction that is iterative and interstitial. (p. 329)

It is, in other words, a form of social solidarity that emerges from the contradictions and ambivalence encountered in an intercultural space. Because any collective is always already hybrid, the social cannot be disconnected from the individual. This points towards understanding the social as not limited by the image of individuality, and the idea that difference, singularity, and community are not incompatible (Gilbert, 2001). The sense of community however, is not static or harmonious but continually requires change and adaptation.

In relation to the notion that experiences re-articulate within a third space of transition, some of the participants in this study are indeed noticing differences in the way their lives as students are unfolding. In China, participants studied to pass the exams that provided a gateway to studies overseas. Now things seem altogether different. Pearl compares this difference as a move from the hard work of preparing for exams in China to a more liberal environment in Australia. In the first interview she reflects:

> I don't know too much but I think in Australia students is free—they have more free time I think so. In China we study from nine o'clock maybe eight o'clock eight a.m. until six eh at night the students is very tired and they have a lot of class to do. (Pearl interview 1).

In contrast to the pressures experienced at home, most participants, like Pearl, found that being a student, both in the pathway program and the disciplinary program, was more relaxing and more social. The students are, perhaps, at least in their life as students, becoming part of a community engaged in learning together. This contrasts with their previous experiences of studying long hours, in isolation, to pass exams. The following extracts demonstrate in different ways how the student participants perceive their experiences outside the classroom.

Commitment to friends

Kanan demonstrates affiliative solidarity through understanding the interconnectedness of herself with others and including them in her world. After mentioning how much more confident she feels since studying in Australia, she says:

> I think I should be in my class because I feel if I will not go to cl— class I will miss something . . . so I want to go there; also for study purpose that I will support other person . . . I don't know why. (Kanan interview 2).

In stressing the importance of interacting with, and supporting fellow students, she indicates her reflexivity, demonstrating that she has the ability to reflect beyond her own immediate context. Kanan's inclusive approach indicates she may be, in many ways, well prepared to study in the new context and may adjust easily to learning in Australian higher education. Faith demonstrates a different awareness of herself in relation to the other participants as she reflects on the month she spent in the pathway program, comparing her language level with others in the program: "[they] have some problem with English speaking", indicating a perception of herself as more advanced in English language development. Instead of English language development, for her the pathway program provided: "a basic understanding of the Australian educational structure . . . it give you some time to adjust yourself" (interview 2). These reflexive statements indicate an

awareness and maturity, which contradict notions of international students as isolated and marginalized. Montgomery and McDowell's (2009) more recent research also refers to this sense of solidarity experienced by international groups, indicating the existence of a supportive student community.

Study in the library as a "safe house"

In the second interview, some participants discuss the enjoyment they find through studying in the library where they discuss the course tasks with their friends, often in Mandarin, their common home language. When asked to relate something positive from the experience of beginning to study in the degree program, Beryl replies:

> Yeah, so um, ah, I think it's good to, um, study with other students, that's good experience we can do and the group discussion and, ah, um, um, do the work together we talk about the questions and we learn from each other. That's a good experience. (Beryl interview 2).

Skye also finds this practice motivating:

> if I have a homework I can do at home sometimes I can do at home but eh when I read some textbook eh—I'm just when I read at home it's not very eh quick and I'm lazy so I need eh go to university for the people to library to study. (Skye interview 2).

Donna too finds this collaboration a more efficient way to study:

> Oh, my first assignment um um most of time I need my classmate's help . . . all of the afternoon, yesterday afternoon, and the day before um we also um maybe three or four people, they're here and discuss about assignment, yeah, discuss. Oh not, not copy just discuss . . . yes, and er make sure everything . . . I always discuss . . . and er find some solutions . . . in school, in uni, and er do my homework in my place . . . it's a save time . . . more save time than . . . I just um find a solution by myself [laugh]. (Donna interview 2).

Donna's use of "not copy", possibly to reassure the interviewer that in discussing the assignment students are not colluding, shows her compliance with the dominant discourse around academic integrity. She indicates her awareness of the rules stipulating penalties for working too closely with other students.

Clark, unlike those who study in the library, prefers to study at home away from distractions: "No, er I been here er a couple of times but I don't like—you know, I like a very quiet place . . . my home is very quiet, nobody make noise" (Clark interview 2). However, at the same time, he appreciates having the opportunity to discuss tasks with classmates, and finds it is still possible through telephone contact: "if you don't understand something, you can ask classmate . . . that's a good thing but er at home ah we can still do that . . . on phone" (Clark interview 2). This formation of a social grouping provides some degree of "insulation" against the "English only" environment in the university, enabling a form of affiliative solidarity.

In negotiating the differences they encounter and the ambivalence in their lives as international students, participants employ home language social contact with peers. In coming together in the library to discuss their course work, students are continuing a practice developed in the classroom at the pathway college where they agreed that the emphasis on group work was one of the most profound differences between their previous experience of study in their home countries and that of the pathway program.

Canagarajah (2004) refers to such encounters as "safe houses": physical spaces which allow students to be free from the surveillance of the teacher or the institution. He says these spaces are generally outside the classroom, in locations such as the canteen or the library. These extracts indicate that a safe house for some participants can be found in the library where they use their own language to discuss the tasks. Others who choose not to take part in these conversations in the library and study at home may, like Clark, have made use of the telephone contact network developed by participants during the pathway program to maintain that sense of solidarity.

Fear of strangers

Judy however, may not yet have been able to access affiliative solidarity. At the time of the second interview, she seems to be feeling quite isolated, a marked difference compared to the more hopeful interactions with Australians reported in the first interview when she mentioned having an Australian boyfriend and having a part-time job as a carer. In the second interview, after suggesting that the university should provide more opportunities for students to mix socially, she continues:

> Yah because we have been adult we have our own friends, we, if we have something, if we have some experience or something like that we can communicate with our friends but not a stranger . . . so I have been here eight weeks but in our class maybe I have no close friends in our class just . . . study and go home and come here, yah. (Judy interview 2).

Judy indicates that she cannot strike up conversations with strangers. She is the only participant who uses the word "strangers", but Beryl is also hesitant about approaching local students when she considers that they would not want to live with her: "I think first I should improve my English then when I speaking fluent then I think maybe I can get a chance to live with them yeah " (Beryl interview 1).

Pearl also indicates hesitancy about forming new friendships when she relates her experiences at orientation: "I joined er orientation in the first time and I met some new friend but but ah I'm not this kind of people to like ah talking with another people so I just stayed with my old friend" (Pearl interview 2).

These indications, from some of the young Chinese women participants, of reticence to interact with people they do not already know may not be so unusual in young female students. Fear of crime studies indicate that international students who perceive themselves as outsiders are more likely to experience this kind of fear and that it can be alleviated by better integration into the community (Xiong & Smyrnios, 2013). Kanan, the only non-Chinese female in the group, sees that making new connections and developing friendship networks is one of the best aspects of her studies. This indicates that she may not be feeling the same isolation Judy, Pearl and Beryl seem to be experiencing. However, unlike the Chinese women, Kanan has relatives living in Australia, and may have wider support networks beyond fellow students, enabling her to avoid the isolation her peers are experiencing.

This evidence of a sense of solidarity being available to some participants, despite the marginalization assigned by their status as international students, suggests they are able to transcend the stereotype of the isolated, struggling student. These examples show how some participants are gaining strength and actively creating opportunities to develop a sense of community, an "insurgent intersubjectivity" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 329), both within and outside the university setting. Clark and those who discuss their course tasks in the

library are beginning to develop a student sense of community. Montgomery and McDowell (2009) suggest that this positive support from friends and co-nationals can sustain and encourage international students. At the same time however, this group solidarity is not accessible by some participants in this study who appear to be, at this stage of their transition to the degree program, restrained by the discourses that position them as passive and reserved.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of these interview extracts where students relate their experiences reveal their complex positioning in a liminal space of transition. They are under some pressure to adapt to Australian higher education and they do this in different ways. It has been shown that students do cope with the task, but in a variety of ways. At times they take issue with the academic discourses that shape their lives, showing their reluctance to passively accept the new and different academic practices they encounter. At other times they approach the inevitable challenges with the attitude that they are not insurmountable. The transition to the degree program can be seen as a process of becoming, where students are both acted upon by relations of power in each institution, and, at the same time, capable of subverting that power to begin to claim agency. These international students do not always fit the stereotype of the passive, isolated student set against the superiority of a western education (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). However, the contradictions apparent within each participant's "cultural world" mean that this process of accommodation is a complex and, in some ways, unattainable achievement. Perhaps what is most clear is the degree to which this achievement appears better understood by the participants than by the institution within which they are performing this cultural work.

This discussion has provided some evidence that the contribution brought by international students to the university is easily obscured in the tendency to label them in simplistic ways. All too often, students' practices are delegitimized and students marginalized while their prior professional experience is ignored (Tran 2010). While this discussion has not specifically focused on how international students are viewed from the perspective of the institution, the interview extracts suggest that the responsibility for success in English language development lies mostly with students, and that there is little appreciation of the knowledge and skills that they contribute, which leaves them to make a one-way adjustment to the academic context.

Despite the ongoing awareness of the need to promote inclusivity of international students in higher education, there has been slow progress (Clifford, 2010; Harman, 2005). The potential for student agency and the complex identity positions shown by this group of postgraduate students suggest that organizational change may be enhanced by continuing to move away from views of international students as a homogenous group and acknowledging their strategic approaches to studying in a new context.

Although some participants were able to rethink and extend their principles, others did not seem to demonstrate such flexibility. While these adaptations may be an inevitable requirement given the physical separation of the pathway and degree programs, more emphasis on disciplinary language and ways of learning could be included in the pathway curriculum. Pathway programs can be more relevant to the future study experiences of students if they are able to engage more fully with content in disciplinary programs (Benzie, 2011). While the collaboration between programs required for these stronger

links may be difficult to achieve due to the different disciplinary discourses at each location, the continuity would benefit students and result in a more appropriate Pathway curriculum.

Ways in which this change could be implemented from the disciplinary perspective include developing curriculum to fit the needs of students from a wider range of backgrounds. For instance, once students left the shelter of the pathway program, the task of continuing English language development was left entirely to these students—a realization not lost on Kazuo—but perhaps yet to be realized by others in the group. More overt inclusion of how language is used in the disciplinary context may be one way of changing the curriculum to better suit the needs of international students.

Focusing on one university, this study cannot allow generalization to other contexts. However, it provides a single case study which can be incorporated into further research on a wider range of pathway colleges or universities. Another limitation in the study is that it has attempted to capture only one short stage, a snapshot of the participants' transition experiences. Taken over a longer period, participants' reactions may have shown a different trajectory. Further longitudinal research could provide deeper insight into participants' lives and, perhaps, indicate more interest and involvement in their experiences on the part of the institution.

CONCLUSION

The existence of pathway programs intended to prepare international students for their experience of higher education can lead to the assumption that students will move seamlessly from one institution to another. While experience in a pathway program does prepare students for the higher education context, both through language development and an introduction to the academic culture, an even greater benefit may be gained by the connections made with a group of peers. These social connections endure beyond the pathway context and set students up for learning interactions in the degree context. Replacing a focus on difference with the more complex version of identity negotiation encompassed in the notion of a third space can enable more productive ways of imagining international students: as making sense of the complex transition experience and bringing a range of resources to the process.

This paper has shown how the lens of the third space of transition can highlight the experiences of international students as more complex and ambivalent than has been described in the literature. Viewing students from overseas as a homogenous group, as passive, and as automatically in deficit leaves less incentive for institutions to accept international students as valued members of the academic community who are strategic in their approaches to learning and living in a new culture. Not only is the opportunity for a quality learning experience denied for learners who have much to offer, but also their (non-monetary) contribution to Australian higher education tends to be ignored.

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Progressive educational development in Thailand: A framework for analysis and revision of curriculum development, classroom effectiveness, and teacher performance evaluations

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The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is soon to become a reality for Southeast Asia. Thailand is, literally, at the centre of this radical change in politics, culture, business opportunities and, most especially, education. Never before has another change in the region ever forecast such a major impact on the Land of Smiles. *Equally, never before has Thailand faced an alteration of such magnitude and found itself at a major disadvantage. Countries throughout the region are making sweeping changes in their educational systems to try and prepare their coming generations with the skills and abilities needed to compete not only in the AEC but also globally. Thailand, however, seems to be moving in the opposite direction – most poignantly in adult higher education – thus severely disadvantaging young adults who are expected to impact and lead their country into the future. How can Thailand face the reality of the AEC and forego its own preconceived notions and prejudices so that true, lasting educational progress can be made, avoiding the knee-jerk response of saying something is being done without actually doing anything? What are the nuances of previous hindrances compared with progressive models for improvement? How can competency and quality be selectively and accurately measured for effective change and, again, avoid saying something and not doing anything? This paper covers such issues and establishes a framework for validating not the curriculums themselves but the manner in which curriculum is presented, utilized, and evaluated in a mode that is legitimate and productive for competing on the world stage.*

Keywords: education reform; adult education; Thailand; ASEAN; critical thinking; Asian education; professional education

INTRODUCTION

Problems with educational development in Thailand stem largely from the inability of those who are responsible for the improvement of the educational system to "step out of the box" and look at problems with a fresh perspective. As stated by Chulalongkorn University lecturer Assistant Professor Sompong Jitradab in *The Nation* news source: "this problem was not new and had plagued the country for nearly two decades" (Aramnet & Mahachai, 2013, para. 9). Young adults entering the college and university stage of their educational development are expected to impact and lead their country into a future

which sees Thailand as a member of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC); however, these student face significant challenge because their educational system seems to be taking a backward turn.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the causes of the problems and list actionable solutions. It reviews academic publications and supporting economic data to identify the factors influencing the current educational development of Thailand as well as the factors that should be taken into account to prepare the next generation of Thai learners to participate in AEC developments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The relevant research and data for this report was obtained from journals, including online journals, available at the researcher's university of employment library. The journals are recognized ones pertaining to educational development in Thailand. As well, other resources reporting on Thailand's educational situation and statements by individuals associated with the issue are used; such as findings from educational institutions throughout Thailand concerned with the identification of critical areas of collegiate curriculum development, educational experts' reports on curriculum development, and data released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and various government administrators in Thailand. The paper begins with a listing of the findings and goes on to suggest a framework for improvement.

FINDINGS

The 2011 *Thailand Competitiveness* report presented by Dr Somchai Sujjapongse, Director General of the State Enterprise Policy Office, Ministry of Finance, highlighted a number of disturbing numbers concerning the quality of education in the Kingdom of Thailand (see Figure 1). Consistently, Thailand ranked at the bottom in all educational sectors throughout ASEAN countries: Singapore is ranked highest, followed by Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Malaysia (Sujjapongse, 2011). In 2012, the WEF released their standard report on the competitiveness of nations. Again, Thailand ranked at the bottom of the "ASEAN – 8", below Vietnam and Cambodia (Schwab, 2012). Both Vietnam and Cambodia have, historically, had lower rankings in nearly every category than Thailand (Chinnawongs, Hiranburana, & Wongsothorn, 2006; Ng, 2001; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). This finding is especially confounding since Thailand has consistently provided more funding for educational development as a percentage of GDP than either Vietnam or Cambodia (Aramnet & Mahachai, 2013; Richmond, 2007; Schwab, 2012; Schwab, 2013).

Many professionals and experts in Thailand dispute those results (Intathep, 2013). However, when the WEF's findings are compared with those of the PISA study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the results are corroborated. The PISA study evaluated the scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading by 510,000 15-year old students across the globe (OECD, 2014). Out of sixty-five countries participating in the tests, Thailand ranked 50th place in mathematics, 48th in science, and 47th in reading (see Figure 2). These 15-year old schoolchildren who participated in the testing back in 2012 will enter college and university at the same time as the AEC begins.

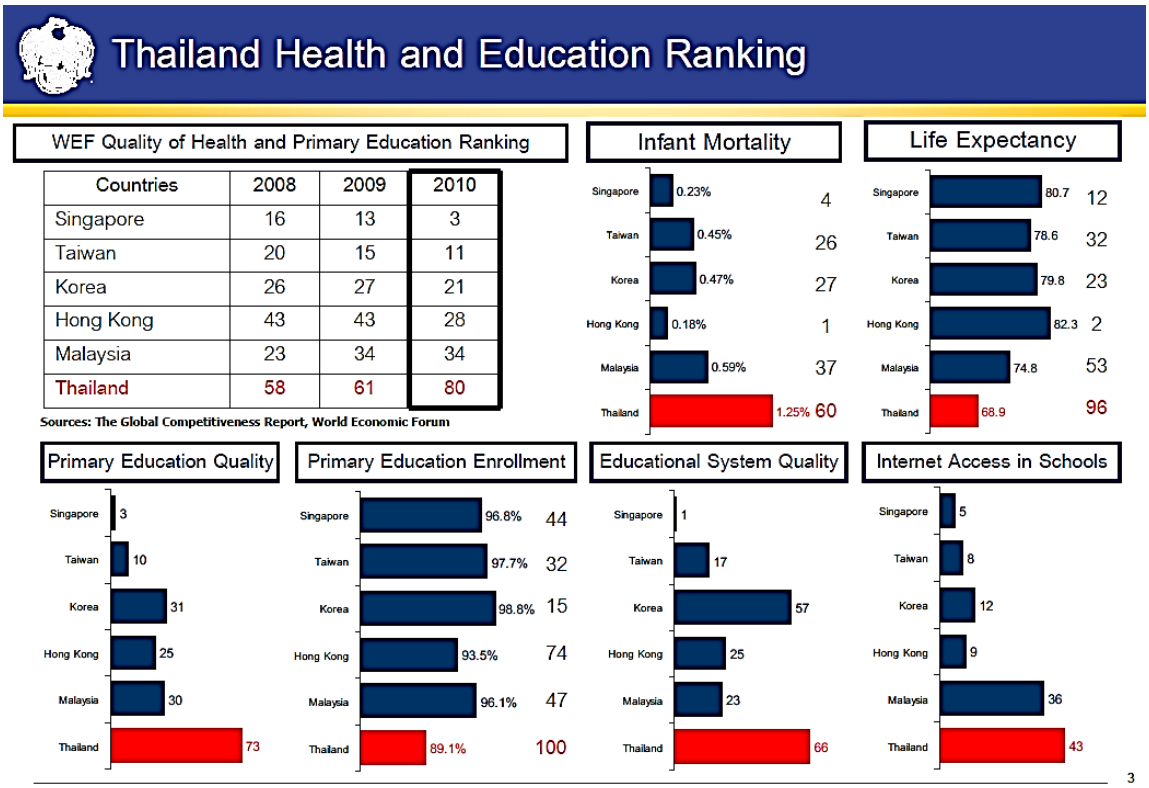

Figure 1: Ranking of Thailand's educational level among ASEAN countries (Sujjapongse, 2011, p. 3)

Root causes

To understand the problems inherent in the Thai educational system, it is necessary to look at the root causes; basically, the bases of the problem have been prevalent for a long time and can be found in Thailand's culture, administration and competency.

Culture

Thailand is famous for its relaxed environment and cultural aspects; these are magnets for tourists and should be treasured. This relaxed attitude to life seems to permeate part of society and the level of responsibility for the quality of a particular action or project is usually given nominal adherence in order to minimize the level of accountability one faces (Chinnawongs, et al., 2006; Hallinger & Lee, 2010; Richmond, 2007). Although the Thai culture is beautiful in its own right, at some point reality must dictate changes in perspective if the most beautiful parts of the culture are to survive without forced foreign influence when economic conditions become desperate (Krachangvej, 2005; Lohitkul, 2005; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

	Maths		Science		Reading	
1	Shanghai, China	613	Shanghai, China	580	Shanghai, China	570
2	Singapore	573	Hong Kong, China	555	Hong Kong, China	545
3	Hong Kong, China	561	Singapore	551	Singapore	542
4	Taiwan	560	Japan	547	Japan	538
5	South Korea	554	Finland	545	South Korea	536
6	Macau, China	538	Estonia	541	Finland	524
7	Japan	536	South Korea	538	Taiwan	523
8	Liechtenstein	535	Vietnam	528	Canada	523
9	Switzerland	531	Poland	526	Ireland	523
10	Netherlands	523	Liechtenstein	525	Poland	518
11	Estonia	521	Canada	525	Liechtenstein	516
12	Finland	519	Germany	524	Estonia	516
13=	Canada	518	Taiwan	523	Australia	512
13=	Poland	518	Netherlands	522	New Zealand	512
15	Belgium	515	Ireland	522	Netherlands	511
16	Germany	514	Macau, China	521	Macau, China	509
17	Vietnam	511	Australia	521	Switzerland	509
18	Austria	506	New Zealand	516	Belgium	509
19	Australia	504	Switzerland	515	Germany	508
20=	Ireland	501	Slovenia	514	Vietnam	508
20=	Slovenia	501	United Kingdom	514	France	505
22=	Denmark	500	Czech Republic	508	Norway	504
22=	New Zealand	500	Austria	506	United Kingdom	499
24	Czech Republic	499	Belgium	505	United States	498
25	France	495	Latvia	502	Denmark	496
26	United Kingdom	494	France	499	Czech Republic	493
27	Iceland	493	Denmark	498	Austria	490
28	Latvia	491	United States	497	Italy	490
29	Luxembourg	490	Spain	496	Latvia	489
30	Norway	489	Lithuania	496	Luxembourg	488
31	Portugal	487	Norway	495	Portugal	488
32	Italy	485	Italy	494	Spain	488
33	Spain	484	Hungary	494	Hungary	488
34=	Russia	482	Luxembourg	491	Israel	486
34=	Slovakia	482	Croatia	491	Croatia	485
36	United States	481	Portugal	489	Iceland	483
37	Lithuania	479	Russia	486	Sweden	483
38	Sweden	478	Sweden	485	Slovenia	481
39	Hungary	477	Iceland	478	Lithuania	477
40	Croatia	471	Slovakia	471	Greece	477
41	Israel	466	Israel	470	Russia	475
42	Greece	453	Greece	467	Turkey	475
43	Serbia	449	Turkey	463	Slovakia	463
44	Turkey	448	United Arab Emirates	448	Cyprus	449
45	Romania	445	Bulgaria	446	Serbia	446
46	Cyprus	440	Serbia	445	United Arab Emirates	442
47	Bulgaria	439	[illegible]	[illegible]	Thailand	441
48	United Arab Emirates	434	Thailand	444	[illegible]	441
49	Kazakhstan	432	Romania	439	Costa Rica	441
50	Thailand	427	Cyprus	438	Romania	438
51	Chile	423	Costa Rica	429	Bulgaria	436
52	Malaysia	421	Kazakhstan	425	Mexico	424
53	Mexico	413	Malaysia	420	Montenegro	422
54	Montenegro	410	Uruguay	416	Uruguay	411
55	Uruguay	409	Mexico	415	Brazil	410
56	Costa Rica	407	Montenegro	410	Tunisia	404
57	Albania	394	Jordan	409	Colombia	403

Figure 2: Results of PISA tests (PISA, 2014)

Thailand has a proud history of independence. However, oftentimes that nationalistic pride is a hindrance to social, economic, and educational influence from other cultures with more experience in progressive reforms. The hindrance is primarily caused by a lack of diversity in ideas and processes embedded in nationalistic narratives that guide reviews and what foreign ideals should be included/excluded (Rappa & Wee Hock An, 2006, pp. 1, 3). When some foreign initiative is adopted, it is usually something that appears to have had significant success in another country with apparently similar circumstances, and is thus adopted to solve a particular problem in Thailand, but the adoption is carried out without an evaluation of the initiative's legitimacy for the particularities of Thai culture (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Administration

Administrators in Thailand have a tendency to focus on maximizing profitability with short-term goals. However, greater profitability is more likely if planning is for the long-term and plans are adhered to. The focus on short-term profit focus continuously places educational institutions into time-consuming and costly capital expenditure to gain profit (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2000; Lauridsen, 2002; Richmond, 2007). The consequences are (Chinnawongs, et al., 2006; Ng, 2001; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003):

- Acquiesce to a more relaxed learning environment and learning expectations resulting from student complaints
- A more entertaining social networking experiences to meet student preferences as a replacement for academics
- Parental preferences based on prestige of the institution or cost savings of tuition programs rather than performance of the student
- Cultural stigma to perceived dealings with negative situations or language deficiencies
- Acquiesces to nationalistic tendencies negating foreign influence

English competency

Poor English competency in Thailand is a critical example of the need for improvement to enable the Kingdom to meet future challenges. Both the WEF and PISA tests are conducted in English, and, more importantly, article 34 of the *ASEAN Economic Charter* stipulates: "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (Shimizu, 2011, p. 29). As stated by Richmond: "The educational methods commonly used in developing countries, particularly rote learning by students expected to be passive recipients of knowledge, are mostly ineffective at training professionals to think critically and creatively about the development needs of their nations" (Servatamorn 1997, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 13). Students are expected to obey social norms rather than pursue academic excellence. They must remain respectful and not embarrass the teacher; they should avoid asking questions even if they do not comprehend the lesson (Hallinger & Pornkasem 2000, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 50). In addition, there is a perception that English competency is only useful for obtaining employment (McVeigh 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 99).

These factors begin to explain the excessive presence, and resulting administrative acquiesce, of learner preferences to extracurricular activities that building greater levels of social networking through "stepwise" education in a guided and directed fashion

(Ajisuksmo & Vermunt, 1999, cited by Richmond, 2007, p. 56-57) rather than through cognitive and critical-thinking methods prevalent in Western cultures (McVeigh, 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 232). The Thai learner is inundated with so much "stepwise" learning that they are apathetic and passive to further valid academic pursuits that exercise their academic potential (McVeigh, 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p.232). As reported by Chadha, Frick, Green & Wang (citing Baer et al, 2007), a study of the literacy skills of 1,827 college and university students using the same standards as the US National Assessment of Adult Literacy (2003) guidelines, revealed that 23 percent of 2nd year college and vocational school students were proficient in English, and 38 per cent of 4th year college and universities students demonstrated proficiency. Seventy-five percent of 2nd year school students and 50 per cent of 4th year school students had inadequate skills for summarizing editorial writing.

One of main problems of Thailand's adult learning environment stems directly from instructors' mindsets concerning student evaluations; that is administrative competence is included in students' annual instructor performance evaluations. Thus, student evaluations often include irrelevant factors and teachers, who are inherently paranoid about loss of salary, benefits, and, even, their position, take notice. "Instructional Quality" scales measuring evaluation ratings have a high correlation between favourable student evaluations and favourable grades at the end of term (Johnson, 2002). Instructors who facilitate learning environments which took into account learner preferences for level of difficulty and socialization opportunities also received the highest approval ratings (Johnson, 2002, p. 14): for example, 30 percent of learners *expecting* a "B" grade or higher rated the course as "Good", and 43 percent of learners *expecting* to receive an "A" rated the course as "Excellent" by end of term (p. 14). Johnson (2002), from Duke University in the US, studied the comparative effects on received grade in nine teaching categorical items and found that in every category the "tendency of students to rate more highly those courses for which they received higher grades is nearly uniform" (Johnson, 2002, p. 15).

The problem, as stated previously, is that the numbers look great, the instructors are pleased, and the learners are satisfied, but the students' mastery of the subject material is non-existent (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 14).

DISCUSSION

The need for the development of education in Thailand requires greater focus on the causes of students' learning barriers. To say that learners need to be more motivated or inspired is an easy response. The need is to deliver the required course objectives in a manner that learners can adhere to, as well as to adequately prepare them for their chosen career (Grace, Jacqueline, & Jared, 2008); both must be comprehensive and efficient.

Instructors

Operating under the assumption that the lecturer has the required qualifications and the institution in question conducted a thorough check of said qualifications, the key problem of instructor competence, therefore, lies in attitude and perspective. Individually, no instructor can be expected to conform to rigid standards of personality and expectancies, because every instructor is different and those differences are what bring richness and

creativity to the classroom (Fitzgerald, Kelly, Park, & Zha, 2006; Grace, et al., 2008; Kenneth, 2010). This paper identifies several issues that require attention:

Instructors' attitudes

The instructors' attitudes greatly affect the learning medium. Instructors' attitudes toward students are likely to affect what students learn, and the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy can occur based solely on instructors' indifference or negative outlook/expectations toward students . . . a negative mindset (Fitzgerald, Kelly, Park, & Zha, 2006). Misconceptions regarding the level of competency of students' native cultures, then empathetically lowering expectancies with non-standard English, or native Thai (Grace, et al., 2008). Subsequent instructors' inability to create a truly welcoming atmosphere for students because of aforementioned misconceptions that may negatively affect learning, as well as a lack of a forum for discussion to address the linguistic challenges and cultural differences present in diverse classrooms (Kenneth, 2010).

Improving the attitudes of instructors

Kenneth (2010) notates that instructors with graduate degrees hold higher positive attitudes toward language and cultural diversity than instructors without such degrees, and must possess a concrete awareness of cultural differences and groups to work effectively with students from different cultural backgrounds. Fundamentally, multicultural knowledge should include an understanding of how knowledge itself is created, an understanding of how it can be viewed as a construction of society, and an understanding of how it is important to the hospitality industry (Kenneth, 2010). Once instructors have a better attitude, the stage is set for them to be critical of their own perspectives and of the subsequent impact it has on the learning environment.

Adult-Learning Facilitation

One of the primary issues with instruction lies in the use of pedagogical techniques in adult learning. To clarify: pedagogy is the use of child-based learning where the instructor is the centre of attention and expects the learners to follow his or her directives through repetition to prove coherence and comprehension. Pedagogy is not a useful teaching tool for adults since they do not pay as much attention to something without significant reasoning. Adult-based learning, andragogy, engages the learner to provide feedback to demonstrate their cognitive acceptance of the information. Facilitation is the act of helping to guide and move a circumstance along in specific directives, but with the learner being more proactive and participating in a manner that includes active feedback and original thought (Brookfield, 1986).

Performance Evaluation

Evaluations of teacher performance have a significant impact on not only the instructor's every-day performance but also the recruitment process of key talent. However, in Thailand, when questioning the individual teacher, the subject of performance evaluations is almost always shunned and dismissed as being invalid (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). This lack of valuation of student assessments of the instructors' performance is a direct reflection of the instructor's desire to remove the inclusion of student opinions of their performance in instructors' annual performance appraisals and contract renewals (Brookfield, 1986; Vandenberg, 2005). Student responses are critical to the progressive development of the curriculum and teaching environment but, too often, these evaluations

highlight inconsequential, invalid, irrelevant, or even redundant topics that end up having no constructive applicability (Calkins & Micari, 2010; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Invalidity of student performance evaluations

According to Sangnapaboworn (2003), the deficiencies in the Thai educational system are not the cognitive capabilities of the learners, but rather the complaints associated with the difficulty level of the subject from both learner and parent perspectives, as well as the subsequent acquiesce of the instructor's curriculum to learner preferences in order to foster a more favourable assessment at the end of the semester.

A comparison of second year and fourth year students' learning environments in Thai colleges and universities show deficiencies in students' performance evaluations in response to the grading assessments provided by lecturers. These studies indicate that students' responses are based on personal opinions reacting to negative grade results instead of on curriculum relevancy to their performance; the consequence is lecturer curriculum design that is more friendly to student expectations (Kenneth, 2010; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). The need for radical change is apparent. Baer, et al. (2006) show a substantial link between a productive learning environment and grading assessments. The performance evaluations of the students based on their perception of the relevancy of the curriculum focuses the learning environment and grading, decreasing the chance of possible invalid responses due to personal bias or conflict between lecturer and student. Complementing this idea are the key factors for success seen in the Chadha, et al. (2007) report where the support of instructors – both inside and outside of the classroom environment, a placement of high expectations for self-study and grade results, and the integration of material in social applicability of the students' post-graduate futures promote a more effective educational experience. Both of the Baer et al and Chadha et al reports provide curriculum preparation and evaluation guidelines that can contribute to an effective model of radical change that is recommended to all learning adult institutions in Thailand.

The critical element to consider when including student assessments in teacher performance evaluations is the effect this has on the psyche of the teacher. Most instructors make significant personal and professional sacrifices to become masters of their respective subjects (Johnson, 2002; Sangnapaboworn, 2003), and to be subject to scrutiny of their jobs and careers at the *whim* of a learner is regarded as worrisome by most instructors, disturbing by some, and insulting by nearly all (Calkins & Micari, 2010; Chadha, et al., 2007, p.12; Johnson, 2002; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Competition for attracting key talent will become an increasingly critical component to the individual institution's long-term success (Calkins & Micari, 2010, p. 15) but how can that institution attract talent if their performance evaluations are overly critical and inclusive of debunked and irrelevant student opinion? As Johnson (2002) points out: "As an increasing number of universities use student evaluations of teaching in administrative decisions that affect the careers of their faculty, the incentives for faculty to manipulate their grading policies in order to enhance their evaluations increase."

FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVEMENT

The instructor needs to provide multiple avenues of communication for the students to feel engaged, but students must, themselves, actively engage in the learning medium

(Fitzgerald, et al., 2006; Kenneth, 2010; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). There must be accountability in the grading that does not include supplemental testing. There must be clear accountability in the student's grade failings, regardless of whether the learner acknowledges their incompetencies or not. The recommended evaluation techniques for assessing a teacher's performance to improve the student's learning, as well as the administrative role in circumventing the cultural barriers to curriculum development are framed below.

The door swings both ways

The instructor must design the learning environment and mediums for teaching to include facilitation techniques and cognitive testing, but the student must find the motivation from within to learn. "Students must engage in solving those problems so that instructors can coach them and give guidance and feedback as needed" (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 15), but the integration of the cognitive skills from that practice, guidance and feedback must be completed by the learner. Non-compliance should be considered a failure of the course and student grades should reflect non-compliance regardless if students like it or not.

The Likert scale and feedback

A Likert scale is predominately used for the psychometric testing of respondents' ratings of preference for the evaluation of an issue. Open-ended questions are an opportunity for respondents to post their opinion on issues or to provide more detailed explanation for an item not sufficiently expressed by the Likert scale question. Historically, the main issue with the use of a Likert scale questionnaire on teacher performance assessments by learners has been the bias in questions that encourages student to provide opinions on the appearance of the learning environment or the physical characteristics of the instructor. The curriculum and learning mediums are what should be the focus of the questionnaires, not the instructor's personality or personality nuances (Johnson, 2002, p. 9). Questions about the instructor's punctuality, appearance, linguistic factors, and personal habits and traits should be eliminated. Questionnaires should, instead, focus on nine specific categories (Johnson, 2002, p. 13):

1. Instructor concern for the subject
2. Encouragement of questioning
3. Instructor enthusiasm for the subject
4. Instructor availability outside of the classroom
5. Instructor rating compared with other instructors
6. Instructor communication coherence
7. Critical thinking exercises
8. Comprehensiveness of quizzes and examinations
9. Applicability of subject material to career or personal life

Vocabulary enhancement

Vocabulary development is the cornerstone of every subject's coherence and validity (Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007), regardless if it is a subject of language, business, or other concentration in a learning environment where English is mandated by the aforementioned article 34 of the ASEAN Charter. Most experienced teachers will admit to using such techniques as multiple-choice testing, crossword puzzles, vocab-box plug-ins, etc. (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007), and, most honest teachers in Thailand will acknowledge that such tactics fail because they test memory and the

student's proclivity for cheating (Carter, 2014; Ng, 2001). More successful techniques take a set of vocabulary words studied in the learner's own time, followed by an in-class lecture in which each word is reiterated and explained by the lecturer both verbally and visually, and then cap-stoned with group or pair discussion exercises in which the key requirements for validity are the inclusion of the vocabulary word in question (Richmond, 2007). When followed with comprehension questioning on a quiz – open or closed is inconsequential – where the definition has been specifically paraphrased, then only the learner who has genuinely studied and understands that definition can correctly identify the correct corresponding vocabulary word (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007).

Comprehension questioning

Proficiency in grammar and spelling is important for cognitive responses, but what is more important is the ability to communicate effectively, using grammar and spelling that is understandable. Given enough time and practice, the learner can perfect skills in their chosen profession as the skills become necessary, but for the sake of learning in an adult setting, some flexibility that encourages more motivating learning exercises is recommended (Brookfield, 1986). Comprehension questioning is only as good as the level of participation demonstrated by the student. If students are discouraged or demotivated the learning opportunity reduces (Ng, 2001). Requiring a comprehensive answer to a complex question should include the use of the corresponding industry or subject jargon and be reflected confidently in short-answer or complete sentence formats.

Critical thinking

Developing critical thinking is an essential part of the learning process that begins with ensuring that vocabulary learnt through to comprehension questions (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). The validation of comprehension of the vocabulary, followed by comprehension short-answers, is finally tested through critical thinking exercises, such as case studies analyses where the questions themselves are not guiding the student's responses in a suggestive manner, but take a cold case of a seemingly identifiable calibre and asking students for their thoughts on effective solutions (Johnson, 2002). Provided that the learner has used the corresponding vocabulary in a comprehensive manner in the same question and short-answer format, then success can be gleaned and confidently tested in a final examination scenario (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Follow-up: Examination

Once the vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills have been presented, practiced, and produced, then the learning validation must be documented. This should be done in the form of an examination(s). Critical to this examination purpose is the use of correct testing methodologies, eliminating those methods that are established or easier for the instructor (Johnson, 2002). Multiple-choice questions should be avoided because learners can easily develop systems for cheating and only serve to test the students' ability to memorize or guesstimate. This can also be said for gap-fill exercises, vocabulary-box questioning, crossword puzzles, matching exercises, and picture association, which are all valid practice mediums in a pedagogical setting (Ng, 2001). For adult learning validation, they serve no other useful purpose than to relieve the workload of the

instructor or faculty member committing the grading duty (Johnson, 2002). A proper examination will include the following components:

- Vocabulary comprehension using the same technique of paraphrasing learned definitions and requiring the student to identify the correct vocabulary word without prompts of any kind, or through presenting the vocabulary word and asking the student to write the corresponding definition – though this latter exercise should be reserved for learner groups with more advanced levels of English comprehension in whatever subject they are studying using the English language.
- Short-answer questions requiring the same use of vocabulary identification as for complex answering systems but, in examinations, the questions should be fewer but combine related concepts to test the students' ability for comprehension and adaptation.
- Critical thinking exercise, such as case study analysis, similar to the form presented in individual unit comprehension quizzes is crucial, as it takes the aforementioned skills of vocabulary and short-answer forms and puts them into an independent exercise of a situation and requires adaptation of vocabulary and complex thinking to solve the case study scenario's problems. For examinations, the case study analysis should include more questions than in-class exercises, and require demonstration of capacity to adapt vocabulary.

Follow-up: Grading rubric

A significant contributor to educational development is the need to upgrade and improve the method and rating of how the students are graded. Previous grading scales have been too generous, typically in favour of the pressure from performance evaluations that result in a low ranking for the entire Thai educational system. Table 1 provides a model of the grading rubric in use for meeting international standards, with measureable success in Thai classrooms:

Table 1: Grading scale rubric: Course: 902237 International Human Resource Management

95 – 100	=	A+
90 – 94	=	A
85 – 89	=	B+
80 – 84	=	B
75 – 79	=	C+
70 – 74	=	C
65 – 69	=	D+
60 – 65	=	D
0 – 59	=	F

Critical to this effort is the final term assessment that is devoid of the traditional considerations of grading for attendance, participation, uniform adherence, and discipline. These are important aspects to student evaluations, but at no point should an adult learner receive cognitive component grading for wearing the correct clothing or showing up for class.

Curriculum

Most curricula in Thailand are adapted from international curricula but have been, typically, presented in learning modes that were ineffective for cognitive assurance, or

moulded to acquiesce to learner and parental demands. Some aspects of the curriculum require specific attention: namely there is a need to exclude culturally preferred subjects in favour of subjects that have more practicality and usefulness on an international scale, especially for the upcoming AEC. What has been highlighted throughout this paper is the impediments brought about by Thai culture to educational development. Cultural necessities, however, should not be ignored and those that are concurrent with their mode of analyzing and integrating should be enhanced. Nevertheless, previous attempts at including predominately "Thai Wisdom" (Sangnapaboworn, 2003) in educational reform may have been unbalanced and overseen by individuals susceptible to cultural and nationalistic bias. While Sangnapaboworn's assessment of maintaining culturally sensitive values is commendable, the patterned cultural response mechanisms are devoid of permitting cognitive adaptation, such as cultural bias to avoid negative issues, cultural bias to avoid questioning established doctrine, and cultural bias to attentive detail for facilitation techniques.

SUGGESTIONS

The development of education in Thailand has two possible options:

1. Collaboration: This idea suggests that each program should be developed as a collaborative effort, with individual instructors assigned to develop specific programs based on their experience teaching the subject and qualifications for which they were hired in the first place, but all coordinated under one mutually designed vision. This development effort should be overseen by one individual to ensure curriculum outline adherence but follow the outline devised by the group.

   Potential Problems:
   (1) Existing issues with certain instructors, including demonstrated reluctance to participate in previous curriculum improvement efforts. When collecting information for this paper, the author faced reoccurring objections with rationales such as perceived insufficient time or, more commonly, simple laziness.
   (2) Additional problems of varying skill sets in documentation and computer usage abilities, as well as a lack of desire to communicate with other instructors, makes uniformed appearance and content of revised material extremely difficult, and most likely not possible.

2. Singularity: This is the concept that the entire curriculum using English as a medium for instruction be designed/revised by one or select group of instructors capable of working together with one vision, and without hesitation or negative mindsets. It guarantees efficiency and uniformity, as well as completion on a timely basis.

   Potential Problem: Should one, or even a select group, be elected to perform this task? To carry out this option requires a significant reservation of the instructors' workloads and teaching schedules (6-10 months estimated), ignoring most other teaching duties.

Plutarch said: "What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality." This means that in order for us to improve circumstances we must start with ourselves. We must change that which is at fault if there is to be true progress, and sometimes that means looking at those faults in earnest regardless of how difficult they may be. The consequence of failing to do this and opting for traditional responses that sound better than they are will continue the downward spiral that has landed Thailand at the bottom of the central ASEAN members.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted several critical issues of cultural bias and historical nationalistic tendencies that have contributed to the lack of progressive development of the Thailand's educational sector. Changes to curriculums to make them more creative and cognitively focused are possible but instructors face problems and disadvantages, as well as a lack of competency and training in how to do this. This paper recommends that each instructor participate in facilitation techniques to understand how to change their instructional practices, with specific emphasis on utilising andragogy techniques (e.g. converting classroom methodologies from closed, recall questioning to open, creative questioning). The proclivity of the learner in the Thai culture is to regard difficulty with disdain. However, true fostering of a progressive, andragogy-based learning environment can only come from (1) imposing internationally-acceptable curriculum, (2) expecting and maintaining strict adherence to rigid grading expectations, (3) providing relentless mediums for continued communication inside and outside of the classroom, and (4) showing the learner precisely how the data will improve their lives and careers (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 12).

What is required will mean a significant increase in work and attention required by the instructor, but the future of the country's progress demands more effort from the instructor than ever before. It is important that the administrative staff support the autonomy of the instructor in the classroom and ensure that the instructor's adherence is to the academic results; that is, a results-driven learning environment rather than an evaluation-based one.

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Documenting student engagement using an intention/reflection exercise during an advanced pharmacy practice experience

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The article shares the outcomes of a practice called Intention/Reflection (I/R) when applied to a group of ten students in a five-week course involving an international advanced pharmacy practice experience. Developed by the authors and founded on a combination of theoretical principles, this practice is unique because of the blend of formative and summative activities. I/R activities account for learning goals established by the instructor but also promote the mindful creation of a student's own personal set of learning outcomes. In this practice, prior to any learning experience (which could be as long as a semester or as short as a single class session), students respond to questions that help them identify their individual learning goals and how this knowledge gain will help them. A similar set of questions at the end of the experience is meant to help the student understand the effect of the experience, and connect the students' intention with their learning outcomes. The results show two benefits from the learning process. First the students are able to monitor their own learning and track what they want to learn as well as how they learned it. Second, the practice appears to help students identify new distinct personal learning outcomes and a way to achieve them.

Keywords: international education experiences; intention; reflection; transformation; student perspectives

INTRODUCTION

Reflective writing exercises (RWE) are a valuable tool for faculty involved in an international education course, and have been used in this capacity for many years (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009). During an international travel experience, students may undergo both an educational and cultural transformation, which can be difficult to entirely absorb (Hawkins, 2012; Lenz & Wister, 2008). The use of specific questions in the reflection process captures important information, which can help guide students' experiences and enhance their overall educational outcomes. As noted below, a variety of education theories suggest that learning is most effective when the student has a personal and meaningful connection to the material. Also important in the learning process, especially in a travel experience in which the student must navigate language, culture, expectations, etc., is an examination of the experience designed to identify specific knowledge gains. With this in mind, the authors developed an educational practice called Intention/Reflection (I/R), primarily designed to build upon existing learning by allowing the student to identify his/her unique learning desires and results.

This qualitative research study focused on the following question: Can an I/R exercise effectively facilitate a transformation in student learning during an international Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE)? The article will outline the I/R process, and share the results of students who have consistently documented their experiences using a pre-, mid-, and post-travel exercise.

This paper is not meant to offer an in-depth critical examination, or promote international travel and study abroad experiences. The purpose of this article is to provide an outline of the I/R practice when applied to an international travel experience. A review of existing literature related to international travel is important, however, because this data coincides with the development of the questions used in the I/R practice.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCES

The importance of studying the overall educational outcomes involved in international travel experiences continues to rise given the increasing number of students engaging in these types of learning activities (Institute of International Education [IEE], 2008). As the IEE highlights, while the number of students engaging in longer term (one or two quarters) international travel experiences are in slight decline, the number using short-term programs of eight weeks or less are rapidly increasing (59%).

Students' immersion into a new country—with values, customs, traditions, etc. that differ from their own—presents them with unique challenges (Lenz & Wister, 2008). Some researchers have suggested that, instead of expanding their critical thinking skills, these challenges may actually cause students to reduce their ability to assimilate new experiences and focus more on practical needs (Adler, 1975; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). As a result, the overall benefits of an international travel experience can be reduced for students (Hawkins, 2012; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Lenz & Wister, 2008).

The international experience creates an immersion into a culture unlike any other. It is through these experiences that a deeper understanding of diversity can take place. Ingraham and Peterson (2004) shared the overall positive effects on the international experience for students: "All of the reports reflect the belief by both faculty and students that they . . . learn more and more deeply while studying abroad" (p. 93) through an overall increase of personal growth and intercultural awareness.

There are several types of learning experiences that can take place during an international class. Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) focused on evaluating three domains for global learning in students: cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal domains. The focus on these three domains is important "since the research evidence supports the generalization that students with education abroad experiences are more apt to become more global in their perspective in the intellectual domain than they are in the other two domains which are non-cognitive" (p. 111). Students are able to experience travel first hand and compare and contrast similarities and differences that may exist culturally from the international perspective. This is exceptionally important to note for those students who are travelling with a health-specific perspective, since culture, policy, and health environments may be factors of patient care. In an international experience regarding nursing, Hawkins (2012) states: "The international learning experience provides a unique opportunity for students to venture out into the world. Not only are these students getting unique healthcare experiences that challenge their thought processes and critical thinking

skills, and promote the development of cultural and clinical competencies but they are also getting unique opportunities to build their confidence in life skills" (p. 7). Research has also shown that students in professional programs develop connections to new values toward the profession due to the global perspectives that are presented during the travels (Lindsey, 2005). Therefore, students' perspectives, values, and motivations of practice can be altered due to the experiences and outcomes that personally take place during international opportunities.

INTENTION/REFLECTION

The practice of reflection has been promoted for decades as a meaningful learning activity. The American educational guru John Dewey stated in 1933, "we do not learn from experience . . . we learn from reflecting on experience." Educational research over the last several decades further suggests that reflection and RWE can promote critical thinking (Sobral, 2000) and the development of one's professional identity (Mann, 2009), among other benefits.

Also, specifically related to health care, reflection promotes the concept of learning from one's experiences—a crucial aspect of continuous professional development in health care (Mann et al., 2009). As Schon points out (1983), reflection allows the learner to continually reevaluate his/her learning needs, which facilitates the entire learning process.

Different models and approaches to reflection have been proposed, many in the 1980s and 1990s. They all have in common what Dewey (1933) defined as a basic tenant of reflection: "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge" (p. 118). In practical terms, the act of reflection includes examining our experiences in light of our beliefs and perceptions for the specific purpose of developing greater understanding and guiding our actions in future experiences.

Several specific aspects of RWE have been highlighted in educational research as fostering successful outcomes. Among them are sufficient time and energy to fully engage in the activity (Boenink, Oderwald, DeJonge, VanTilberg, & Smal, 2004; Mamede & Schmidt, 2004), and an environment that is flexible, supportive and authentic (Mann et al., 2009).

Problems associated with RWE include the issue of honesty or, as Williams and Wessel (2004) state, "students may write what they think the teacher wants to hear" (p. 22). Duckett (2002) highlighted similar issues in stating that students who are unclear of the purpose of the activity may not derive the intended benefits from it. Maloney, Hong-Meng Tai, Lo, Molloy, & Ilic (2013) note, while true reflection offers benefits, certain factors can positively or negatively influence its effectiveness. Among them are students' knowledge and skill in applying the critical reflection process. Another potential issue is the quality of reflection. Leijen, Valtna, Leijen, & Pedaste (2012) note that not all student reflection is of the same level or quality. Higher education, especially in a professional pharmacy program, generally strives toward higher order thinking, which is required to solve difficult, complex problems. Lucas (2012) refers to this as the breadth and depth of thinking in reflection. This study attempted to account for these potential issues in the design, as outlined below.

The act of reflection, by definition, is an examination of what has occurred in the past. As valuable as this is in the learning process, the authors speculate that an equal amount of value may be gained by examining similar questions before the learning experience has taken place. In addition to asking students, "what did you learn?" the authors asked students what they expected to learn, and what they hoped to gain from the experience. These questions, and this approach, is based on an amalgamation of educational theory, activities, and research including constructivist theory, formative assessment, student-centered learning principles, inquiry-based learning, backward design, self-directed learning, and others. The unifying factor in these various theories is that they urge learners to address a basic question: "why are you engaging in this learning experience?" This important question is designed specifically to engage adult learners and promote higher order thinking skills.

When adult learners identify meaningful reasons for engaging in a learning experience, they are more likely to fully engage in that experience, and are more likely to experience positive outcomes (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners, distinct from K-12 students, bring a set of experiences and prior knowledge to the classroom. Often in an advanced professional program, they may also bring a heightened ability to ask critical questions. Knowles argues this critical thinking skill drives the need to connect course material with real-life scenarios; essentially answering the question: Why are we learning this? Brookfield (2000) goes further in explaining this connection by showing how engagement and interest increase in adult students when they are able to identify their own learning skills and use those to address the "why" question mentioned above. The positive outcome is that students' needs are met, and they are able to connect theory with practice. The effects of this can also positively affect students' persistence through difficult periods of a program (Bers & Smith, 1991). The aspects of adult learners as identified by Knowles and Brookfield—intrinsically motivated, self-directed, logical, critical, and interested in quickly applying course material—suggests they will respond favourably if they can identify purpose and meaning in what they are learning.

Much of the work mentioned above is directly connected with Piaget's groundbreaking work on how people perceive information and respond to it (Piaget, 1961/1969). He observed that knowledge acquisition occurs most effectively when students are intentionally engaged in the subject of study, as opposed to passively absorbing and storing it. This led to the development of his theory of constructivism, which proposes that students who have authentic and meaningful interactions with information are more likely to remember and fully understand it (von Glasersfeld, 1981/1984).

Embedded within constructivism is the argument that, consciously or not, humans are goal-minded entities. We tend to repeat successful experiences and not repeat unsuccessful experiences. As von Glasersfeld so poignantly noted, "the success of a key does not depend on finding a lock into which it might fit, but solely on whether or not it opens the way to the particular goal we want to reach" (p. 14). With this in mind, a student who has identified learning goals (intention) and then is able to document the achievement of those goals (reflection) may be more likely to engage in the learning process repeatedly.

Based on the work mentioned above, the authors developed the I/R educational practice. This practice is unique because of the blend of formative and summative activities based on a constructivist learning approach. Perhaps most importantly, I/R is an entirely

student-centered practice. By contrast, previous education practices around content have been entirely, or mostly, teacher-centered (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002); learning goals and formative assessment methods are based on the instructor's view of what is most important. I/R activities account for learning goals established by the instructor, but also promote the mindful creation of a student's own personal set of learning outcomes.

This practice is also a seamless whole. The learning experience, from beginning to end, is connected directly and obviously through this practice. Previous practices have made attempts at a similar objective, but have been disjointed and somewhat inaccessible for most learners to notice. I/R asks learners to identify what they will learn and how they will learn at the beginning of the experience and expressly states that they will be asked these same questions at the end of the experience.

The I/R practice has been used previously in various higher education settings including online courses and international interprofessional courses. Based on a combination of anecdotal feedback and unpublished research from these groups, students find this practice to be beneficial and have provided generally positive feedback regarding the overall process. Specifically, students have noted that it has helped them align personal thoughts to the upcoming experience and offered them an opportunity to reflect on what they learned through the experience. Perhaps most importantly, students can identify how they will change future behaviour.

I/R is a series of questions designed to facilitate a critical examination by learners to help identify what and why they want to learn, and how they are going to learn, regarding a given learning experience. The I/R questions are separate but may be related to the course objectives outlined by the instructor. This practice is not intended to take the place of instructor-defined course goals and objectives. Rather it is designed to enhance them based on the student's areas of interest experience or future needs. Students are encouraged to identify these uniquely personal learning goals and develop methods to acquire the desired knowledge or skills using the course content as a framework. Students' desire to learn is based purely on their own set of goals, questions, desires, and frames of reference. The course content provides a vehicle with which to achieve these goals.

This additional knowledge and skill acquisition can be gained in any learning experience. However, the experience of the researchers shows that learners rarely identify potential learning opportunities outside the specified learning goals as outlined by an instructor. This practice specifically and intentionally asks learners to identify—independently of what is outlined in the course content—what they would like to gain from the experience.

The first step in the process is prior to the formal learning experience (course, experiential activity, seminar, etc.). Students respond to a set of questions regarding their specific intentions for the experience. Questions can include:

- What do you intend to learn from this experience?
- What do you hope to gain from this course?
- How did you decide to engage in this learning experience?
- How will you ensure you achieve your intention for this experience?
- How will this opportunity affect your future profession?

The timeframe for these intention-based questions can vary based on the learning experience. For example, the intention activity for the international travel course mentioned in this research took place two weeks prior to departure. However, the intention activity for a one-hour speaker or lecture may take place in the first few minutes of that hour. The timing of this portion of the practice depends on the framework of the learning experience.

Once the formal learning experience has taken place, the reflection activity occurs. Again, a specific set of questions, which mirror the intention practice, are presented to learners. Some examples include:

- What did you learn that was most surprising to you?
- To what degree did you achieve your learning intention?
- How has this learning experience changed your perspective?
- What steps did you take to ensure your team was prepared to succeed?
- If you had to repeat the process of learning this information, what would you do differently?

These questions are designed to stimulate critical self-examination and foster a sense of ownership in the learning process. The questions may change, and additional questions may be added depending on the learning experience and outcomes desired. It may be appropriate to simply have an open text area for students to record other personal reflections. The important guideline is that the reflection questions tie directly and specifically to the intention questions.

Additional reflection sessions may be added in the middle of the learning experience if the overall time span of the experience warrants mid-point reflection and correction. For example, the international course noted in this research was five weeks long, and included one mid-point reflection to allow students the opportunity to refocus and adjust their learning outcomes accordingly.

As mentioned earlier, the researchers are continuing to identify the core structure and questions affiliated with I/R to create the optimal learning environment for students.

METHODS

The I/R practice was applied to a group of ten University of Minnesota Pharm.D. students during a five-week course involving international travel to Germany. This experiential course was part of the students' APPEs, during which students are placed in various pharmacies for 5-10 week rotations during their fourth and final year of school. Students must apply for the international rotation in Germany due to the limited spaces available. On average, each year, the university graduates 170 students. The selected students are responsible for their own transportation to the country. All other expenses such as room, board, and travel during the APPE are included in a student fee. This country was selected due to the involvement and interest of a pharmacy business-owner connected with the university.

Throughout this rotation, students worked closely with a licensed pharmacist, or preceptor, who shared with them the practice of pharmacy in Germany. Students also met with local government officials and collaborated with German pharmacy students. The

course objectives were: 1) to describe the structure of US/German pharmacy systems, international pharmaceutical markets and the relationship among health professionals, health service organizations and payers; 2) to recognize best-practice elements; and 3) to identify factors that facilitate and impede health policy change. Students explored the pharmacy practice in small towns as well as larger cities such as Berlin.

Three phases of I/R (pre-, mid-, and post-) were included in this APPE experience. The first was completed shortly before departure for Germany, the second occurred while they were in Germany, and the third phase was completed one week after arriving home. At each of these points in time, students were given an explanation of the purpose of these writing activities. The entire bank of questions from each phase is outlined in Boxes 1, 2, and 3.

Box 1: Phase 1 Pre-travel Intention/Reflection writing activity

1.1 Describe your previous domestic and international travel experiences.

1.2 What experiences have you had with cultures other than your own?

1.3 Why are you engaging in this international learning experience?

1.4 Identify at least 3 specific areas of interest you want to explore further while you're in the Germany APPE Rotation.

1.5 In what ways do you feel this experience will affect you in your future profession?

1.6 How can you best prepare yourself to be healthy during the international learning experience (physically, mentally, and emotionally)?

1.7 Share any additional thoughts/questions/revelations.

Box 2: Phase 2 Mid-travel Intention/Reflection writing activity

2.1 At this point in the Germany APPE Rotation, what experiences have provided the most value for you, personally and professionally?

2.2 What are some things that you didn't expect? What surprised you about yourself?

2.3 Based on the 3 specific areas of interest that you identified prior to departure that you wanted to explore, describe those you have currently experienced. What did you learn from those experiences?

2.4 If you haven't experienced them, why not? If you still would like to experience those learning opportunities, what are your plans for achieving that goal?

2.5 Describe any new areas of interest you would like to explore further while you are on this international journey. How will you achieve these?

2.6 How can you continue to keep yourself healthy during this international learning experience (physically, mentally, emotionally)?

2.7 Share any additional thoughts/questions/revelations.

Box 3: Phase 3 Post-travel Intention/Reflection writing activity

3.1 Based on the areas of interest you previously identified as important during the Germany APPE Rotation, describe how (or if) those experiences affected you.

3.2 What was the most influential thing you learned during your international experience? What are some things you didn't expect? What surprised you about yourself?
3.3 How will you apply the learning experiences from the Germany APPE Rotation in the future? Share how this course (readings, tours, presentations, travel, etc.) might influence you in your future profession.
3.4 What best practice elements from the United States and Germany would you introduce into the other countries pharmacy system? Please explain your position. Describe how this would be implemented in the respective country, according to the experience that you gained during the Germany APPE Rotation.
3.5 Describe how you kept yourself healthy during the international learning experience (physically, mentally, emotionally)? Identify additional ways that could have improved your well-being.

The researchers identified a subset of questions to analyze for the purposes of this study. This subset is outline in Box 4. These questions were selected for analysis because they represent (and potentially identify) a common thread throughout the experience. Also, they were specifically developed to help respond to the primary research question: Can the I/R practice capture facilitate a transformation in student learning during an international APPE?

Box 4: Analyzed questions

1.4	Identify at least 3 specific areas of interest you want to explore further while you're in the Germany APPE Rotation.
1.5	In what ways do you feel this experience will affect you in your future profession?
2.3	Based on the 3 specific areas of interest that you identified prior to departure that you wanted to explore, describe those you have currently experienced. What did you learn from those experiences?
2.4A	If you haven't experienced them, why not?
2.4B	If you still would like to experience those learning opportunities, what are your plans for achieving that goal?
2.5A	Describe any new areas of interest you would like to explore further while you are on this international journey.
2.5B	How will you achieve these?
3.2A	What was the most influential thing you learned during your international experience?
3.2B	What are some things you didn't expect?
3.2C	What surprised you about yourself?
3.3	How will you apply the learning experiences from the Germany APPE Rotation in the future? Share how this course (readings, tours, presentations, travel, etc.) might influence you in your future profession.

Questions 2.4, 2.5, and 3.4 were broken into 2 parts (A and B), and item 3.2 was broken into 3 parts (A, B, and C). Splitting these questions was done to ensure the discreet pieces of information from each part were reflected accurately during analysis.

Responses to each of these items were de-identified, and analyzed using NVivo 10 software. Each student response could include several distinct topics (health care, communication, professionalism, etc.). Because of this, each response was broken down and analyzed by coding similar words or phrases, and then grouping those coded words/phrases. A researcher reviewed these for accuracy and to make sure the software program interpreted individual words and responses appropriately. The number of codes within each question ranged from seven to 53, with a total of 306. After the responses were coded, they were put into larger groups or themes. Themes represent a broad topic, such as "Health Care" or "Pharmacy." The number of themes that emerged from each question ranged from three to ten.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The questions used in the analysis of this study included a subset of the entire field of I/R questions used during the travel experience. A subset of questions was chosen primarily because only certain questions can help determine whether or not students were engaged (and how much) as a result of this practice. For example, questions 1.6, 2.6, and 3.5 asks students to identify ways they are going to stay physically and emotionally vibrant during the experience. While these questions add to the total picture of student learning, they are not directly connected to assessing student knowledge gains. Related to this is the size of the data field. To analyze every word in every response would be unnecessarily burdensome, and would draw resources away from analyzing the primary question at hand. For the purposes of this study, the researchers chose to analyze only those questions that would provide the most accurate depictions of student engagement (or lack thereof): questions 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 3.3.

Questions 1.4 and 2.3 (pre-travel) were based on students' interests prior to, and during, the experience. Out of the 53 coded responses provided by the ten students attending the rotation, 14 (26%) statements made by six of the students were focused on exploring healthcare, primarily the differences between the US and Germany. An example of these responses is, "I hope to take away the key aspects that can be applicable to the US healthcare system."

Nine responses (17%) from four different students focused their responses on pharmacists, specifically the way they practice inter-professionally, dispense medicines, and work with patients. The third highest number of responses (7 or 13%) pertained to pharmacy in general. These comments, made by seven students identified overall general practice, formulary and advocacy.

When asked again, midway through their experience, if they had experienced these and what they learned, the responses again focused primarily on health care and pharmacy with seven comments each, and that the questions prior to departure had been answered. Students' ability to track their knowledge gains, from pre-travel to at least the mid-point of the journey suggests involvement and investment in the learning process. Additionally, it highlights that students were indeed receiving their intended knowledge gains during the experience, or recommitting themselves if they hadn't achieved their intended goals.

Questions 2.4 and 2.5 (mid-travel) yielded 19 distinct coded responses from all students related to the students' perceptions about what they achieved and/or learned at the mid-point of the experience. These questions also were meant to help the students identify ways to accomplish their learning goals if they hadn't already done so, and to reveal new learning interests. Six students mentioned that these knowledge gains were achieved and/or the student would like to experience even further. A representative statement from one student was, "I believe I have experienced all of the areas of interest but I want to build on them and gain more experience in each area." The other four students who had not achieved their intended outcomes identified ways to achieve them. One student commented: "I will take more time to reflect . . . during my train ride to Prague to really dive into what I have already gotten from this rotation, and to assess what else I would like to get from this rotation."

During mid-point reflection, all students documented additional areas of interest that they would like to explore further. Of the seven students who responded to how they would achieve that, six described working in some capacity with the faculty preceptor. One student described the mid-point reflective experience as playing a key role: "I will be reflecting on my journal entries and compiling a list of things I may have mentioned that I still wanted to explore during this rotation."

The responses to questions 2.4 and 2.5 highlight two benefits of the I/R practice. First, students displayed a heightened level of self-interest in the learning process, as well as specific areas of related content. The propensity of some students to mediate and monitor their learning suggests commitment to specific learning practices, and indicates a trend toward successful lifelong learning, which is necessary in any health care related field in which periodic professional development is a requirement of licensure. Second, students displayed a strong interest in identifying additional (previously unknown) content areas they would like to explore further. This benefit of the I/R practice helps students identify hidden learning opportunities and knowledge gains. In other words, it can help students recognize what they don't know, or what they lack, in their experience and education.

The benefits outlined above are consistent with findings and learning models proposed by many other educational researchers, including Brookfield (2000), Knowles (1980), and Mezirow (1991). Brookfield (2000) said adult learners benefit from self-assessment and reflection practices because it stimulates a desire and confidence in their ability to continue to learn new information. Knowles (1980) proposed that adult learners are often most engaged when they have a specific interest in the content. When students are able to identify future learning needs through their own exploration, the continuous cycle of lifelong learning is strengthened.

These findings are also consistent with the concept and benefits of heutagogy, in which learning is monitored and mediated by the learner (Hase & Kenyon, 2007). While heutogogy is a recently devised model, it is essentially based on the work of early 20th century educators Helen Parkhurst, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and others who assert that learning is most efficient and effective when learners self-identify learning outcomes and methods.

Questions 1.5 and 3.3 focus on how students feel the APPE rotation would affect their future profession. Question 1.5 was asked before departing on the trip. Out of the 36 coded responses to question 1.5, ten (28%) responses from seven students were focused

on improving intra/interpersonal issues, including communication skills, comfort zone, and pride. One student commented, "This experience will help me grow as a person, and help me develop my communication skills." Eight responses (22%) from five students related to pharmacy in general, chiefly focusing on advancing the profession, practicing pharmacy, and being active in the profession. A comment related to this theme was, "I think my experience in Germany will help me to be able to better understand why there are differences between pharmacy practice in different countries." Responses related to health care comprised the third highest number with six (17%), from five students. Developing a greater understanding of the health care process was the primary focus of these remarks. The final 33% of responses were a mix of comments related to culture changes, awareness of unexpected/unknown future events, and networking/contacts.

Question 3.3 (post-travel) asked students to identify how the experience might benefit them in their future profession. Of 27 coded responses, 16 (59%) responses from eight students were related to how this rotation will help them develop professional skills (e.g., speaking skills, advocacy, networking). One student commented on this by saying they will be "less apprehensive about taking on positions or joining teams that require more political attention, or on taking on more leadership roles." Six responses (22%) from five students were related to their future practice, specifically in the areas of patient care and understanding health systems. One student commented that this experience "will help me as a future pharmacist to be more open to different ways of practice and more empathetic toward patients." The remaining 19% of responses were a mix of comments related to cultural awareness, international travel, facilitating change, and other topics. Of particular note is that six out of ten students mentioned a measurable gain specifically in their ability and confidence related to public speaking.

Question 3.3 (how they will use what they've learned) shows the diverse interests of students. This diversity highlights a difficulty for educators in trying to identify specific learning outcomes for all students. The comments below show the importance of allowing students to self-identify their own learning interests:

- "I think because of these language and cultural barriers/differences, it will help me be more empathetic towards future patients and perhaps be able to relay important medical information to them."
- "All of the presentations we gave as a group have helped my public speaking skills, and my ability to describe the specific learning process I went through in order to be proficient in providing pharmaceutical care."
- "[d]eveloping a healthcare system to benefit every party involved is extremely challenging and nearly impossible."
- "[t]he power of professional advocates" and "to not be passive in our profession."
- "[t]he ability to interact in groups and with others freely . . . this experience has really helped me with my public speaking skills."

The responses to questions 1.5 and 3.3 are perhaps best analyzed as a comparison to note differences and similarities. Half of the students connected their learning intentions from the pre-travel questions to the post-travel reflections. This self-monitoring of learning outcomes, as identified above, can foster and maintain a personal connection to the overall learning process. The other half of students identified new or previously unknown

things they learned during the experience, and highlighted how they will use these knowledge gains in their future profession.

Overall, the results of this group of student responses in the I/R practice indicate several noteworthy conclusions. First, it appears to help students discover a personal connection to the educational experience and specific knowledge gains. Especially in a course on foreign soil during which students' attention can easily be diverted, helping them understand how their learning relates to them personally can be a challenge. This practice seems to encourage that connection by incorporating formal assignments which document, and track improvements and gains related to specific learning goals. This heightened interest may ultimately improve student motivation and engagement, especially during difficult or challenging periods over the course of a program. Second, students self-identified new areas of interest they had learned, or would like to explore further. These new learning outcomes—related to, but distinct from instructor-identified outcomes—seem to help develop a level of metacognition in the learning process. In other words, students seem to become more aware of their own unique learning preferences and abilities. This self-monitoring activity is important to long-term knowledge retention and motivation in the overall learning process.

FUTURE FINDINGS

The I/R practice described herein was designed to improve student engagement in specific course content, as well as the learning process as a whole. While it appears it may positively affect students in this way, substantial work can be done to further prove its legitimacy as a method, and further define the gains that may result from this practice. Possibilities for future research include a comparative study of two or more groups of students engaged in a similar course of study. Also noted by the researchers is that this research project only captures student data from a relatively small period of time. A longitudinal study may reveal or refute the long-term efficacy of this practice. The students could be sent their original intention and reflection responses and follow-up questions could be asked to determine how their thoughts or viewpoints have altered since participation. The value of capturing the students' thoughts in the moment during the I/R process creates the ability to monitor how each student evolves when they are in practice and if their perceptions of certain situations begin to change when they look at it one, five, or ten years after it takes place. Additionally, other factors such as class size, length of course, content, and instructional methods may affect how students respond. These possibilities, and more, exist to further study the effect of this practice on students overall knowledge.

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International professional learning communities: The role of enabling school structures, trust, and collective efficacy

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We explored the role of enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy in 15 pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade international, private schools in South and Central America. The majority of these schools shared an "American" curriculum that was taught predominantly in English, but we found that local culture and school norms affected the development of professional learning communities in each school and country accordingly. In this quantitative study based upon teacher perceptions we found that the more established the enabling school structures, trust in principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy, the more likely the professional learning community was to be developed.

Keywords: professional learning communities; trust; collective efficacy; enabling school structures; international private education

INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been conducted about professional learning communities (PLCs); some even in international schools. While there is much research about the role of the factors: trust, enabling school structures, and collective efficacy, to our knowledge, none has been applied to PLCs in the context of private international schools in Mexico, and South and Central America. This paper explores the role of enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy in the development of PLCs in 14 private international schools in Mexico, and South and Central America. Each school had students that ranged from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade. We hypothesized that enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy would individually and jointly predict the development of PLCs in these schools. Our work extends the knowledge about the development of PLCs, provides the theoretical and practical implications of such, and adds to the literature base about private international schools.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the assumptions underlying the theoretical framework on PLCs is that trust is an essential aspect of its development. The school leader is responsible for establishing enabling school structures through policies, rules, and shared decision-making so that a PLC can be developed and sustained over time (Gray, 2011; Hoy 2002; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Teachers need time to meet, share best practices, and develop lessons collaboratively (Hord, 1997). In considering PLCs in an international context, we are making the assumption that despite geographic location certain common characteristics will be found amongst PLCs in international private schools.

Certain structural conditions are essential to the development of a PLC, including: "openness to improvement, trust and respect, access to expertise, supportive leadership, and socialization . . . time and places to meet and talk, interdependent teacher roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment and school autonomy" (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994, p. 4). Enabling school structures, the policies, rules, and conditions that help teachers to do their jobs more effectively represent these structural conditions within a PLC. School leaders must demonstrate support for teachers' willingness to collaborate, implement new instructional strategies, and share best practices with each other.

Trust and efficacy play an important role in how teachers interact with one another. Because teachers learn, plan, and develop curricula together, their relationships are influenced by the levels of trust and efficacy they have in one another. Trust in colleagues is essential for the maintenance and sustenance of PLCs in schools. How can teachers collaborate with one another if there is a lack of trust? "Trust is the keystone of successful interpersonal relationships, leadership, teamwork, and effective organization" (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2010, p. 3). The assumptions in our study are that: PLCs are an effective approach to restructuring schools for improvement; enabling school structures enhance PLCs; trust is an integral aspect of PLCs; and collective efficacy promotes collegial relationships (Gray, 2011; Hord, 2004, 2008; Louis & Kruse, 1995).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"Two types of supportive conditions necessary for PLCs to function productively: (1) logistical conditions such as physical and structural factors and resources, and (2) the capacities and relationships developed among staff members so that they may work well and productively together" (Hord, 2007, p. 3). In other words, teachers need time and a place to meet in order to collaborate as well as to interact collegially. The development of PLCs depends upon a focus on learning, effective use of resources and facilities, and positive interaction between all participants (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

Enabling school structures represent the formal aspect of the organization, while trust and collective efficacy correspond to the informal part of the organization. In other words, a school with enabling school structures provides the supportive leadership and conditions needed to sustain a professional learning community. Enabling school structures support these conditions and resources, while trust builds the strength of the relationships amongst teachers and the school leader. Without trust in colleagues and the school leader, "shared values," "collective learning," and "shared practice" are difficult, if not impossible, to attain (Hord, 2004, p. 7). Trust is essential to build and sustain a PLC (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

SCHOLARLY AND PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this study we firstly hypothesized that enabling school structures exist in PLCs and that a relationship exists between the two. Secondly, we hypothesized that trust plays an integral role in the relationships between colleagues and school principals in PLCs. Thirdly, we hypothesized that collective efficacy and PLCs are interrelated. Finally, we hypothesized that there is a collective relationship among: enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, collective efficacy, and the development of PLCs as demonstrated in Conceptual Diagram of Hypothesized Relationships. .

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

While there are numerous definitions of PLCs, none is universally accepted. SEDL (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) credits Hord (2007) with developing the term. We chose the Hord (1997) definition as the best fit for this study because Hord's 1997 research led to the development of the Professional Learning Communities Assessment—Revised (PLCA-R) instrument, which was implemented to gather empirical data for this project (Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman, 2003).

Hord describes a PLC as a collegial group of faculty and staff who are united in their commitment to student learning (1997). According to Hord, PLCs encompass these attributes: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (1997). Building upon Hord's research, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) summarized PLC as: "teachers' joint efforts to generate new knowledge of practice and their mutual support of each other's professional growth" (p. 75). Further, there are "two types of supportive conditions necessary for PLCs to function productively: (1) logistical conditions such as physical and structural factors and resources, and (2) the capacities and relationships developed among staff members so that they may work well and productively together" (p. 3).

Louis and Kruse (1995) define a professional learning community as an organization with the following characteristics: "shared values, reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, focus and student learning, and collaboration" (p. 25). Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) note that "broadly speaking, we use the term professional community to refer to schools in which interaction among teachers is frequent and teachers' actions are governed by shared norms focused on the practice and improvement of teaching and learning" (p. 753).

Johnson (2009) provides a good "working" definition for the concept of PLCs as: "a specific model of organizational development and learning for schools that has as its ultimate aim student learning (sic)" (p. 18). Johnson further asserts that a PLC is a "model of school organization designed to foster collaboration and learning among school personnel and to harness this organizational learning to enhance the learning of all students" (p. 18). Johnson's definition combines those of Hord (1997), Louis and Kruse (1995), McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), and Olivier et al. (2003), adding to the literature about PLCs.

International schools

"Schools describe themselves as international schools for a variety of reasons including the nature of the student population and of the curriculum offered, marketing and competition with other schools in the area, and the school's overall ethos and mission" (Hayden, 2006, p. 10). Despite these characteristics, there is no universal definition for an international school (Hayden & Thompson, 1995). However, these schools share a number of common features (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). For instance, international schools possess cultural diversity in the student body and staff (Roberts, 2010; Walker & Cheong, 2009).

There exists a cultural distance between the international school and local host culture. Generally, there is a high student and staff turnover (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). It is important to note that this turnover is not necessarily representative of teacher dissatisfaction. Instead, teachers leave a school so that they can build their international teaching experience by teaching in various countries, or to travel and experience the different cultures in which these schools are located (Joslin, 2002). For the purposes of this study, we define an international school as one that is located

outside of the US, has adopted an "American" curriculum, and is recognized by a regional accrediting agency.

Enabling School Structures (ESS)

Hoy and Miskel (2008) define an enabling school structure as "a hierarchy that helps rather than hinders and a system of rules and regulations that guides problem solving rather than punishes failure" (p. 110). School structures vary along a continuum from enabling to hindering (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Hoy and Sweetland (2001) describe the formalization of the structures as: "the degree to which the organization has written rules, regulations, procedures, and policies" (p. 297).

Organizations with enabling structures facilitate problem solving, protect participants, and encourage cooperation and collaboration through flexibility and innovation (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). In contrast a hindering school structure is tightly managed or controlled by the school leader (Hoy, 2002). Miskel, Fevurly, and Stewart (1979) found that "more effective schools, as perceived by teachers, are characterized by (a) more participative organizational processes, (b) less centralized decision making structures, (c) more formalized general rules, and (d) more complexity or high professional activity" (p. 114). In other words, teachers believe they work in an effective school when they are involved in shared decision-making and collegial relationships, the rules are more formalized, and professional activity is encouraged (Gray, 2011; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

Trust in the organization

Trust has been described as being an essential element in the work of schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). For this study trust is defined as "an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 189). In this study, we focused on two aspects of trust: collegial trust and trust in the principal.

Collegial trust is the faculty belief "that teachers can depend on one another in a difficult situation; teachers can rely on the integrity of their colleagues" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, p. 342). Faculty members who have trust in their principal believe he/she will act with integrity and in the best interests of his/her colleagues (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). "The principal who is friendly, supportive, open, and collegial in interactions with teachers is able to command respect and trust from teachers, and trust is further enhanced by protecting teachers from unreasonable community and parental demands" (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991, p. 96).

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) contend "Tschannen-Moran's (2004) work on trust implies, creating trust among teachers, which happens within professional communities, may be more significant in stimulating change in practice than does having a trusting relationship with the principal" (p. 482). In summary, trust in the principal has an indirect effect on teacher practice, while trust in colleagues may directly influence classroom practice as teachers collaborate and share instructional strategies (Gray, 2011).

Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy is "the group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). In schools, collective efficacy refers to the perceptions teachers have of their colleagues' ability to affect student outcomes in a positive way (Goddard, 2002; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (200) further state: "teachers' beliefs about the faculty's capability to

successfully educate students constitute a norm that influences the actions and achievements of schools" (p. 496).

Tschannen-Moran and Goddard (in Forsyth et al., 2011) assert: "collective efficacy explained more school-level variability in faculty trust in clients than other school-level predictors" (2011, p. 60). Forsyth et al. (2011) describe collective efficacy as a "powerful determinant" of collegial trust, which further supports the framework of this study. We contend that the more efficacious the teachers are as a group, the more likely they are to develop and sustain a PLC.

HYPOTHESES

We assert that these three factors—enabling school structures, trust, and collective efficacy—are essential elements in the development of PLCs in international schools. Prior research has shown a relationship between the three factors (Gray, 2011; Goddard, 2002; Hord, 1997, 2004; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Therefore we hypothesized that:

> **H1: Enabling school structure, teacher trust in colleagues and teacher trust in the principal, and collective efficacy will be correlated with PLC development in international schools.**

While each of the independent variables would logically contribute to the development of the PLCs, there is no guiding literature as to which elements would be greater contributors. Consequently, we hypothesized that:

> **H2: Enabling school structure, trust in colleagues and trust in the principal, and collective efficacy will individually and jointly contribute to an explanation, and be predictive of, professional learning community development within the context of international schools.**

METHODOLOGY

The independent variables in this study are: enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy. The dependent variable is the development of PLCs, and the control variable is teacher nationality. School directors from 89 private international schools in South and Central America were invited to have their teachers participate in this online survey.

Instrumentation

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs development was measured by a shortened version of the PLCA instrument developed by Olivier et al. (2003) and revised to form the PLCA-R (Olivier & Hipp, 2010). The Cronbach alphas for the subscales range from .82 to .94 (Olivier & Hipp, 2010), meaning that the items were reliable and consistent in what they are meant to measure. The subscales of the PLCA-R are: shared and supportive leadership; shared values and vision; collective learning and application; shared personal practice; supportive conditions—relationships; and supportive conditions—structures (Olivier, 2003, p. 69; Olivier et al., 2003; Olivier & Hipp, 2010). Sample items include: leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members; Professional development focuses on teaching and learning; and Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring (Olivier, et al., 2003; Olivier & Hipp, 2010).

The shortened version of the PLCA-R is a 12-item, Likert-type scale with answers ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Olivier et al., 2003; Olivier & Hipp, 2010). The shortened

form of this instrument was developed after two items were selected from each of the six subscales. A pilot study was conducted in eight schools (elementary, middle, and high) in a small southeastern school district in the US. A factor analysis performed on the shortened version of the PLCA-R showed it had high internal reliability: a Cronbach's alpha of .92 (Gray, 2011).

Enabling school structures

Enabling school structure was determined by a 12-item, five-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "never" to "always," and was reliable in the high .8s and .9s (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Sample items include: Administrative rules help rather than hinder; The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their job; and Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communication between teachers and administrators (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 307). For this study the Cronbach's alpha was .91, indicating reliability.

Organizational trust: Trust in the principal and collegial trust

Operationally, collegial trust will be defined by the Omnibus Trust instrument: Omnibus T Scale (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, 2003). The scale is a 26-item, six-point Likert-type scale and consists of three subscales, teacher trust in the principal (eight items), teacher trust in students and parents (ten items), and teacher collegial trust (eight items). The choices for response ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Sample items include: Teachers in this school trust each other; Teachers in this school can rely on the principal; and Teachers in this school are open with each other (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 202; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The alpha coefficient of reliability for trust is .94 (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) and for this study it is .91, both demonstrating high internal reliability.

It is also important to mention that, in private international schools, there are both headmasters and principals. The headmaster manages the school finances, personnel, resources, recruiting, community relations, and more, while the principal is an instructional leader for groups of teachers and students. For example, a school may have elementary, middle, and high school principals who all work under the supervision of the school headmaster (Walker & Cheong, 2009). This partitioning of roles proved to be confusing for some teachers when asked, in our survey, about trust in their principal; this was a limitation of this study.

Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy is measured using the short version of the Collective Efficacy (CE) Scale, a 12-item Likert-type scale with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," and a Cronbach's alpha of .96 (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). Sample items include: Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students; and Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). For this study the Cronbach's alpha was .87, which indicates internal reliability.

Control variable

The control variable is teacher nationality and categorized as native (from the host country) or non-native (from another country). Teachers were given a choice of the host country of the school, indicating "native" status, or the US, Canada or "other," indicating non-native status. The majority of teachers categorized themselves as native, as we would have predicted. The rationale for making this distinction was to control for cultural or contextual differences of the participants.

DATA COLLECTION

One-thousand-and-twenty-five teachers and faculty from 89 private international schools were invited to participate in an online survey using the Qualtrics Research Suite™. The completion rate for teacher data was 18 percent (185 out of 1,025 teachers) of teachers and faculty in the 14 schools that agreed to complete the survey. While this completion rate is low and a limitation of the study, we are taking into consideration the fact that all requests took place over email and these schools received a number of requests for survey completion. The school directors who chose not to participate mentioned numerous requests for survey completion or time constraints as reasons for nonparticipation.

Because enabling school structures, collegial trust, trust in principal, and collective efficacy are all school-level, collective variables, we need to be consistent and view the development of PLCs as a school-level variable as well (Hoy, 2012). As Johnson has observed, "The PLC model represents a set of ideas that its advocates use to harness the collective learning of school organizations in the interest of student learning" (Johnson, 2009, p. 26). The research upon which this study is founded considers the school, or professional learning community, to be the unit of analysis; we analyzed the findings based upon collective teachers' perceptions of their school (Louis & Kruse, 1995).

Sample

We selected international schools with which we had a previous relationship, thus using a convenience sample approach: two schools in Brazil, two schools in Venezuela, five schools in Colombia, and one school each in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Each school educates students from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, with the total enrolment ranging from 190 to 1,200 students. The number of full-time teachers ranged from 22 to 155 educators, while each school had a school director, as well as a principal for the entire school or for each grade section (elementary, middle and high). In the sample, 23 respondents were from the pre-school, 66 were from elementary, 36 from middle, 44 from high school, and 14 were all grade level educators.

We used native nationality—someone who is from the home country of the school—as a control variable. The overall sample was made up of 193 educators, 149 teachers, 12 support staff members, 8 principals, 4 school directors, and 10 participants fell under other job titles. One-hundred-and-three of the teachers who participated were native to the home country of the school, while 90 were non-native. Of the teachers from other countries, 54 were from the US, 6 from Canada, and 23 from other countries. The years of experience ranged from teachers with three years or less (25 teachers), four to seven years (41 teachers), eight to 15 years (69 teachers), and more than 15 years (50 teachers).

DATA ANALYSIS

The independent variables for this study are: enabling school structures; trust in the principal; collegial trust; and collective efficacy. The dependent variable is the development of PLCs. The first level of quantitative analysis is a bivariate correlational analysis using a Pearson Correlation in order to test the relationships of the independent and dependent variables within the context of the 14 international schools in this study. A multiple regression is used to determine the individual and collective relationships between the independent variables, (enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy) and the dependent variable (PLC).

FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1 was supported; all of the variables were correlated significantly with one another (see Table 2). Enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy had moderate to strong, significant correlations with PLCs (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Together ESS, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy, when controlling for non-native status, explained approximately 63 percent of the variance in PLCs development (see Table 3). Each of the independent variables had an effect on PLCs and was significant: ESS (β = .22, ρ < .05), Trust in the principal (β = .36, ρ < .01), Collegial Trust (β = .21, ρ < .05), and Collective Efficacy (β = .22, ρ < .01) as demonstrated in Table 4. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is also supported by the findings (see Table 4 and Figure 1).

Descriptive Analysis

Our first level of analysis involved obtaining descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables in our study. In Table 1 the descriptive statistics for our sample of schools revealed that PLC development ranged from 1.50 to 3.83 with a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of .45. Enabling school structures ranged from 2.00 to 5.00 with a mean of 3.86 and a standard deviation of .63. Trust in the principal ranged from 1.38 to 6.00 with a mean of 4.60 and a standard deviation of 1.00. Collegial trust varied from 1.88 to 6.00 with a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of .80. Collective efficacy ranged from 2.58 to 5.59 with a mean of 4.39 and a standard deviation of .62. Additional variables, position, years of experience, and grade level were included only for demographic information.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for all variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional learning community (PLC)	193	1.50	3.83	2.90	.446
Enabling Structures (ESS)	193	2.00	5.00	3.86	.628
Trust in Principal (TP)	193	1.38	6.00	4.60	1.00
Collegial Trust (TC)	193	1.88	6.00	4.56	.799
Collective Efficacy (CE)	193	2.58	5.59	4.39	.620
Nationality	186	1	5	1.78	1.14
Native	186	1	2	1.45	.498
Position	183	1	5	1.44	1.06
Years	185	1	4	2.78	.994
Grade level	183	1	5	2.78	1.17
Valid N (list wise)	182				

Bivariate correlational analysis

Hypothesis 1 states that enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy will be correlated with PLC development in international schools. Results, shown in Table 2, support the hypothesis. PLC development is positively correlated with enabling school structures (r = .61, ρ < .01), trust in the principal (r = .57, ρ < .01), collegial trust (r = .55, ρ < .01), and collective efficacy (r = .50, ρ < .01). Although not a hypothesized relationship, PLC development was negatively correlated with school level (r = -.08, ρ < .01) indicating that PLC development was higher at the elementary level and declined progressively at the middle and high

school level. School level was inversely related to PLC implementation. In other words, PLCs tend to be more developed at the elementary level. This finding is supported by the research of Herriot and Firestone (1984), who investigated the effect of school level.

The independent variables in this study are also moderately correlated with each other: trust in the principal and enabling school structures ($r = .60$, $\rho < .01$); trust in the principal and collegial trust ($r = .54$, $\rho < .01$); collegial trust and enabling school structures ($r = .56$, $\rho < .01$); collegial trust and collective efficacy ($r = .47$, $\rho < .01$); and enabling school structures and collective efficacy ($r = .47$, $\rho < .01$). Additionally, there is a weak correlation between trust in the principal and collective efficacy ($r = .29$, $\rho < .01$).

Table 2: Pearson correlations of all variables (N=193)

Control variables	Enabling structures	Trust in principal	Collegial trust	Collective efficacy	Position	Years	Grade level
Professional learning community (PLCs)	.61**	.57**	.55**	.50**	.17*	.01	-.08
Enabling structures (ESS)		.60**	.56**	.47**	.09	.05	-.04
Trust in principal (TP)			.54**	.29**	.18	.08	.02
Collegial trust				.47**	.11	-.04	-.01
Collective efficacy (CE)					.04	.07**	-.21**
Position (in school)						.22	.10
Years (of experience)							.06

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Regression analysis

The development of PLCs—the dependent variable—is regressed on the independent variables of the study: enabling school structures; trust in the principal; collegial trust; and collective efficacy, controlling for non-native status of teachers (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Regression model (PLCS regressed on independent variables)—model summary

Model	*R* Non-native (selected)	*R* square	Adjusted *R* square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.802[a]	.643	.625	.27088

a. Predictors: (constant), collective efficacy, trust in principal, collegial trust, enabling structures

b. Dependent variable: professional learning community

When controlling for non-native status of teachers, the variable, enabling school structures, had a less significant positive effect on PLC development ($\beta = .22$, $\rho < .05$), as did the variable collegial trust (CT) ($\beta = .21$, $\rho < .05$). However, trust in the principal (TP) had a significant positive effect on PLCs ($\beta = .36$, $\rho < .01$) and on collective efficacy (CE) ($\beta = .22$, $\rho < .01$), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression of PLCs on ESS, CT, TP, and CE (control is non-native)—coefficients[a,b]

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Model	β	Std. error	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1 (Constant)	.446	.237		1.877	.064

Enabling structures	.150	.074	**.224**	2.015	**.047**
Trust in principal	.146	.042	**.358**	3.514	**.001**
Collegial trust	.104	.052	**.208**	2.013	**.048**
Collective efficacy	.160	.062	**.220**	2.602	**.011**

a. Dependent Variable: PLCs
b. Selecting only cases for which Non-Native = Non-Native Citizen

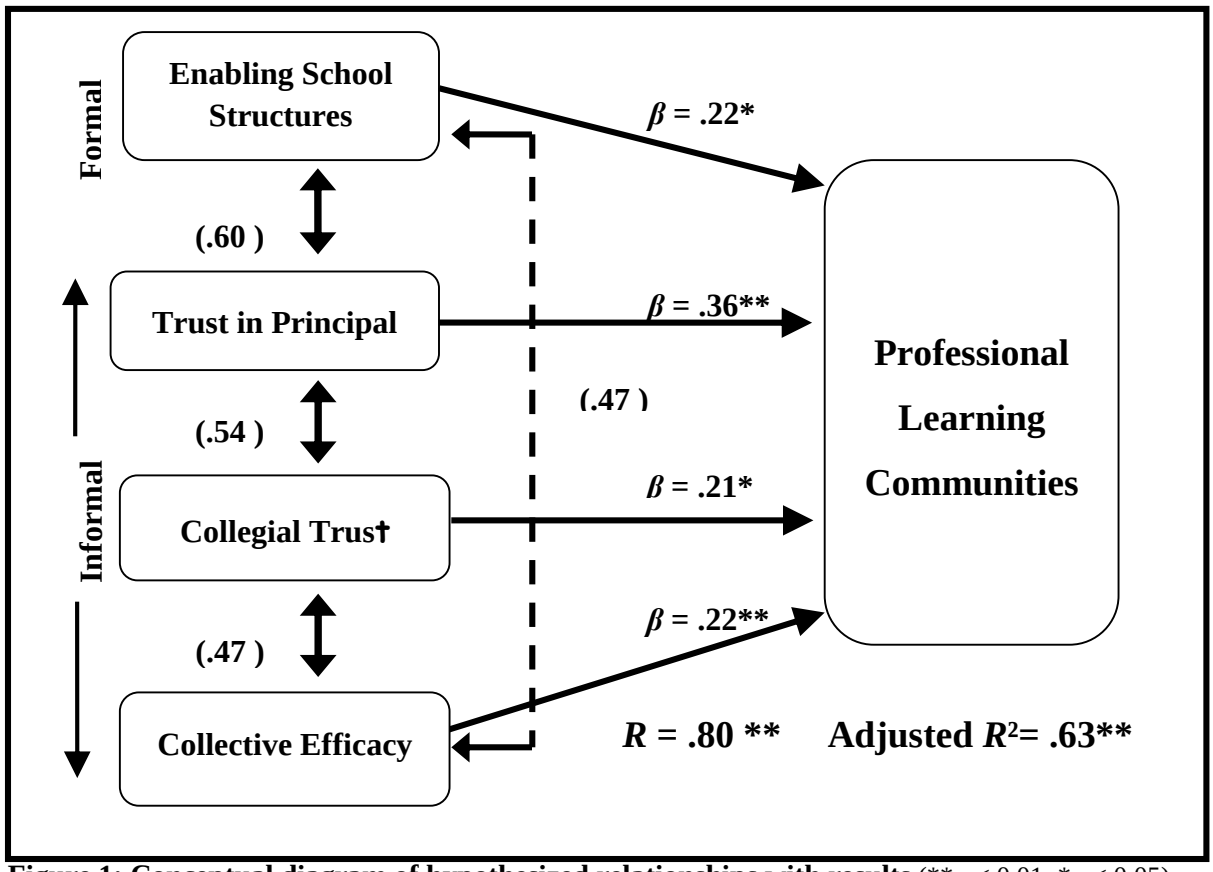

Figure 1: Conceptual diagram of hypothesized relationships with results (** p< 0.01; * p< 0.05)

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS

This study demonstrates the importance and necessity of enabling school structures, trust in the principal and colleagues, and collective efficacy. The empirical findings demonstrate the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables, which are all significant. We argue that these variables cannot exist or be sustained without the other. This reciprocal relationship confirms the hypotheses, yet further extends what is known about PLCs in the context to international schools in South and Central America. Prior to this study, these organizational factors had not been investigated in private international schools. Therefore, the findings and this research study add to our knowledge about PLCs in an international school setting.

SCHOLARLY AND PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study demonstrates the importance of enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy in the development of PLCs in selected private international schools in our sample. Because of the limitation of the sample size, the results cannot be generalized

to all private international schools in South and Central America. The regression reveals that trust in the principal has more effect than the collegial trust, collective efficacy, and enabling school structures. This result is different to the result from similar studies conducted in the US (Gray, 2011).

The empirical findings demonstrate the importance of formal and informal structures as antecedents to the development of PLCs. The reciprocal relationship of the independent variables confirms the importance of such relationships and adds to our conceptual understanding of PLCs. "Collegiality in different nations is influenced by structural as well as cultural arrangements . . . a variety of systematic factors can shape collegial interactions" (Toole & Louis, 2002, p. 264). In many countries teachers prepare lessons within a group setting (Toole & Louis, 2002), although this may vary greatly from location to location. School leaders need to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate, build trusting relationships, and develop efficacious beliefs about their colleagues (Gray, 2011; Toole & Louis, 2002). Without a foundation of trust, it is almost impossible for teachers to share ideas of instructional practice and to truly collaborate (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kruse & Louis, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995).

Theoretical Implications

This study affirms that PLCs must be built upon both the informal and formal foundations of the organization. The formal structure of the PLC allows change, as it relates to classroom practice, to be institutionalized within the school organization (Gray, 2011). The informal structure may encourage those resistant to change to accept such as a way to achieve school improvement via PLCs (Hord, 2004). When the principal acts as a change agent within the organization, he/she shares the power of the formal organization through shared decision-making and leadership opportunities for teachers (Hord, 2004). That is, the principal, through the PLC, provides the structure in which trust (with colleagues and principal) is developed and, thus, the conditions that foster change and innovation are created.

Based upon decades of PLC research, this study asserts that certain physical and structural conditions must be developed for a PLC to exist and be sustained over time (Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008; Hord, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2009; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Kruse & Louis, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, 2006). However, the mere presence of enabling structures is not enough to ensure that a PLC will thrive within a school. Open and trusting relationships must be built between teachers, teachers' colleagues, and the principal for PLCs to produce positive results (Hord, 2007). It seems logical that the operational aspects of the organization and its leadership provide the foundation upon which professional relationships can be nurtured and developed (Gray, 2012).

Hoy argues that, "When school structure was enabling, teachers trust each other, demonstrate professional autonomy, are not bound by rigid rules, and do not feel powerless" (Hoy, 2002, p. 91). Because PLCs are sub-organizational elements, they maintain the general characteristics of organizations; in varying degrees they exhibit formalization, centralization, and specialization (Hoy & DiPaola, 2008; Mintzberg, 1983). Therefore, enabling school structures are critical for the centralization and formalization of leadership within PLCs. Teacher trust in the principal and in colleagues, and teacher perception of collective efficacy contribute to the informal aspects of the school as an organization and PLC (Gray, 2011).

It is important to keep in mind the international context of the private schools in this study. "From an international perspective, it is necessary to ask whether PLCs are critical to current definitions of school improvement" (Toole & Louis, 2002, p. 259). In other words, international private schools

may have other ways to determine school and student success through improvement within the school.

Limitations of the Study

While we believe in the efficacy of our findings that enabling school structures, collegial trust, trust in principal, and collective efficacy are important in the development of PLCs, this study took place in a limited sample and may not be generalizable to other contexts. Further, we are cautious in interpreting our results because of the possibility of multicollinearity between the independent variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) as some instrument items are similar in nature. Further, we acknowledge that there can be limitations in the use of instruments with different Likert-type responses (Norman, 2010). In other words, comparing a scale with four options for response (PLCA-R) with another with five options (ESS) or six options (Omnibus Trust) may not yield the same results. Therefore, we are careful in making "inferences about differences in the underlying, latent, characteristic reflected in the Likert numbers, but this does not invalidate conclusions about the numbers" (Norman, 2010, p. 629).

CONCLUSION

There are numerous benefits to schools embracing the PLCs model for improvement, as supported by the research of Hord (1997, 2004, 2007, 2009), Hipp and Huffman (2010), McLaughlin and Talbert (2001, 2006), and Louis and Kruse (1993, 1995). Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, and Wallace (2005) summarized "the idea of a PLC is one well worth pursuing as a means of promoting school and system-wide capacity building for sustainable improvement and pupil learning" (p. 3). This study demonstrates the relationships between enabling school structures, trust in the principal, collegial trust, and collective efficacy in developing professional learning communities and addressing a gap in the literature. In summary, PLCs provide opportunities for increased student achievement, greater teacher job satisfaction, and overall improvement for schools (Gray, 2011; Hord, 1997; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Stoll et al, 2006). We offer this school improvement and collaboration model for a viable approach to professional development in private international schools.

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Federal policy to local level decision-making: Data driven education planning in Nigeria

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This article discusses the implementation of local level education data-driven planning as implemented by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the Millennium Development Goals (OSSAP-MDGs) in partnership with The Earth Institute, Columbia University. It focuses on the design and implementation of the Conditional Grants Scheme-Local Government Areas (CGS-LGA). CGS-LGA is an active federal policy programme in Nigeria aimed at transforming education policy into practice by providing technology and training to local, decision-makers to create local level plans based on data and then identifying the funding gaps for implementation of the plans. This article discusses the importance of the use of data in planning and in substantiating grant applications, as well as how CGS-LGA was introduced into Nigeria, and lessons learnt from the introduction of the program. A literature review provides information on the development of data-driven planning, and important components of such planning: development of data systems, importance of information to reform education practices, linking information through data to build accountability, and data-driven decision-making.

Keywords: Education policy; educational planning; data-driven decision-making; local government; millennium development goals; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Citizens have essential roles and responsibilities for ensuring the success of their local communities, their nation and, ultimately, the global world. Support and investment in the growth of human development can help sustain a nation's needs and aid further development. A primary demographic group that requires continual guidance and resources to thrive in life are school children. Many issues are important to ensure the welfare of this group, from school attendance, to learning outcomes, to access to education, teacher accountability, relevant curricula, and learning materials. The design

of data collection tools and education indicators, as well as the use of data, localised situation analysis, and organised planning can function as an effective strategy to identify gaps in the provision of resources, as well as help to define and link the most appropriate education interventions. This paper describes an active federal policy programme in Nigeria that, through local level plans, provides funds to help schools overcome gaps in essential inputs. These plans are created at the local level where needs can be quickly verified and data validated. The combination of education data collection, analysis, planning, and technology are of paramount importance in undertaking the program and producing interventions which can positively impact social, economic, and political layers of Nigerian society and beyond.

This paper underscores the importance of data in local education planning and funding requests. It begins by describing the Conditional Grants Scheme-Local Government Areas (CGS-LGA) federal policy program and then goes on to discuss the national data collection process. A literature review on types of data collected, use of education data in various contexts, and data-driven decision-making (DDDM) is presented, followed by a section on methods and discussion on use of data for the CGS-LGA grant application process. The paper concludes by highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and suggesting a more potent application of DDDM in varied settings.

CONDITIONAL GRANTS SCHEME TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

In its Vision 20:2020 strategy to empower the state and local governments to deliver services to its population (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011), the Federal Government of Nigeria made a massive commitment to advance the education and health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in rural and urban LGAs across the country. The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the MDGs (OSSAP-MDGs) is responsible for transforming policy into practice, garnering support across the country, and combining human and financial resources through the use of dynamic localised strategies.

In 2007, Nigeria launched CGS, one of the largest poverty elimination programs in the world, towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. OSSAP-MDGs has been collaborating with Columbia University's Earth Institute since 2010 to develop and operationalize CGS-LGA. The collaboration constituted the use of a variety of tools, and the provision of technical assistance, technology, training, and knowledge sharing, including the development of the Nigeria MDG Information System (NMIS). This existing and expanding federal programme supports a number of primary and junior secondary education interventions in the LGAs and provides a good base from which Nigeria can progress towards its education goals, including improving the quality of education. As a robust process that invests in local ownership and data-driven planning, CGS-LGA provides a cost-sharing platform, requiring a combination of local and state monetary and personnel support.

CGS-LGA is, thus, a nationwide platform that provides selected LGAs with opportunities to obtain funding to support and increase educational quality in primary and junior-secondary schools in their areas. Though local needs form the basis of the funding, the policies and initiatives of national education agencies are foundational. CGS-LGA reaches millions of people and is a conduit for local level data-driven education planning. The CGS-LGA requires 200,000,000 Naira to each LGA for the purposes of increasing

the quality of education in the LGA. To obtain funding, LGA technical teams plan, write, and submit a proposal to OSSAP-MDGs bidding for an allocation of funds. In addition to information about how the funding would improve educational outcomes, the proposal must show how the state and LGA, and relevant national and international organisations, will contribute to the proposed CGS-LGA program. The LGA must contribute 20 percent, the state must contribute 30 percent, and the remaining 50 percent is contributed by OSSAP-MDGs.

Building a community of knowledgeable technical assistants who contribute to planning, implementation, and monitoring of their respective community development projects has been a large focus of The Earth Institute's work with OSSAP-MDGs. Technical assistants are the primary liaison between the LGA and OSSAP-MDGs. They also assemble and coordinate LGA technical and planning teams engaged in the development of a proposal. The funding proposal is expected to be professional, use relevant data, and provide localised situational analyses that explain the rationale for needed interventions. It should also incorporate all funding requests made to the LGA, the state, private partners, and OSSAP-MDGs.

OVERVIEW OF DATA SYSTEMS AND USES

This literature review is divided into four sub-sections. First, it outlines the development of data systems, entailing the creation of indicators and reporting. Second it discusses the importance of applying data and information to education reforms. Third, it discusses the importance of data for building accountability. Fourth it highlights key points on use of DDDM.

Development of data systems

Systematic data collection of relevant education indicators enables real-time analysis to inform policy, resource allocation, and programme design. DDDM is a method for analysing various types of data to develop and advance issues, institutions, and policy from micro to macro levels (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006). It has been used for some time in the education sector. Marsh, Pane, and Hamilton (2006) explain that DDDM uses different types of data to inform decisions but note that DDDM is not a total remedy. Having data available and even transforming it into useable and useful knowledge is not an assurance that action will be taken; rather, action requires strategic support, buy-in, promotion, and a multitude of continual steps to be effective. Initial steps to ensure good decision-making include: goal-setting, ease in using data, linkage to continuous improvement, and creation of a data information system (Datnow, Park, & Wohlsetter, 2007). These steps should then be followed by collection of appropriate data then transformation of the data into appropriate indicators, use of a data management system, and capacity development for users of data (Datnow et al., 2007). These are the steps The Earth Institute and OSSAP-MDGs took to develop the Nigeria MDG Information System (NMIS) and training of technical assistants on NMIS, indicators, data analysis, and relevant tools.

Blank (1993, p. 67) recommends four steps for developing data systems. First, develop a conceptual framework based on the research question in mind then secure commitment from stakeholders (policymakers, educators, researchers, data managers). Stakeholders could use these criteria to decide on the final set of indicators, the importance and usefulness of indicators, technical quality of data, and feasibility of obtaining data.

Second, select a limited number of indicators to minimise complexity in reporting. These indicators then form the "cooperative data system" (p. 71) needing to be developed and linked to data collection processes. Blank recommends working with the ultimate users and providers of this data system to establish standards for producing comparable data. The third step is to match comparative data with reported indicators. The final step is to collect data and report on indicators. Blank points out that the most critical point is to ensure common agreed standards are set for aggregating and reporting data collected by multiple stakeholders.

An example of a large electronic data set is India's flagship programme, District Information System for Education (DISE),[1] SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), which computerizes school facility data. DISE is jointly managed by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD), Government of India, and UNICEF. Data from the annual census of more than 1.4 million primary schools and 205,000 secondary and higher secondary schools is recorded, processed and displayed each year in the form of publically available school report cards. With this data, an updated school directory is maintained and multiple reports are generated on the status of key indicators. Individual data, including: school-going population, number and type of schools; school infrastructure; medium of instruction; grants received and utilisation status; and training of teachers, is compiled at district, state, and national levels.[2] This forms the bulk of data collected at the school level. However, the use of this data at district or state level for planning purposes is not systematically documented. There seems to be lack of coordination between different government agencies, hampering use of this data in a holistic way.

Importance of information in education reform

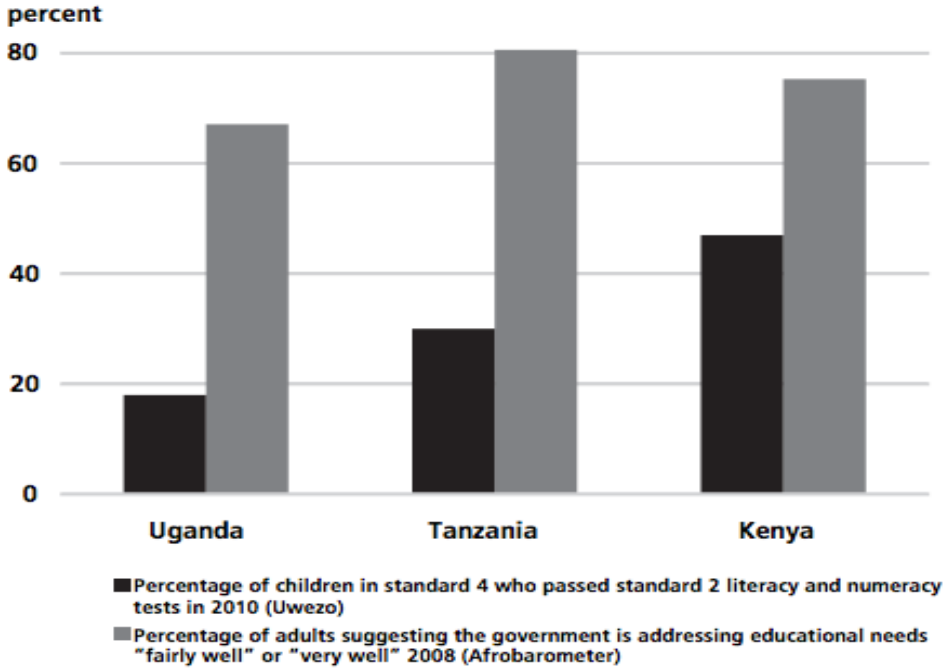
The provision of information or data availability at all levels of the education system (schools, districts, regional, and national) is critical to cultivating policy and implementation-related changes. Lehtomäki, Janhonen-Abruquah, Tuomi, Ikkolin, Posti-Ahokas, and Paojoki (2013) note that a qualitative approach embracing local participation for gathering data and information when conducting international education research is fundamental, because voices from the field are essential sources. Willms (2004) states that many school boards, teachers, and administrators rely on working knowledge to make decisions. This includes some facts, principles, and perceptions guided by personal attitudes and beliefs. However, these decision-makers are aware that this working knowledge has limitations and Willms (2004) suggests that monitoring data can be used by such decision-makers in multiple ways. For instance, data can be used to identify specific problems, providing a basis for discussions towards a solution. An example of this is that data can suggest weaknesses in a pupil's mastery over specific curricular topics and, therefore, guide instructional practices in the school. Monitoring data can be used to assess effectiveness of interventions implemented at various levels—state, district, and school—while also giving rise to new ideas for influencing policy and practice. Willms (2004) also suggests that monitoring data can help administrators and teachers to reduce inequities. For example, teachers could collect frequent test data to inform and improve teaching practices.

[1] For more details on DISE, visit: http://www.dise.in/

[2] For more details on report cards, visit http://schoolreportcards.in/SRC-New/Default.aspx

The Study Group on Measuring Learning Outcomes (2013) suggest that, since there is no universal understanding of "learning", people interpret its meaning in different ways. Figure 1 shows that, in the absence of knowing what "learning" should mean, parents have a skewed perception of how well the government is addressing educational needs; parents' perceptions show little alignment with the reality of poor performance of students in grade 4 who passed grade 2 literacy and numeracy tests. The Group make the point that assessment information should target perceptions of parents and politicians in order to develop improvements in learning outcomes.

It is often the case that parents show an interest in their children's education but lack the knowledge of how to participate in schools. Schneider, Teske, and Marschall (2000) point out that there is often inequitable distribution of information about the local school that varies by socio-economic status of the parents, with low-income families having very little information. In addition, even if parents want to help the school by using their collective power through Parent Teacher Associations, there are usually no clear guidelines as to how parents should proceed. Schneider et al. (2000) term such parents as "marginal consumer" (p. 52).



Source: Uwezo, "Are Our Children Learning? Numeracy and Literacy Across East Africa," mimeograph, Dar Es Salaam (Uwezo, 2011) and Afrobarometer surveys available at www.afrobarometer.org.

Figure 1. Satisfaction Results in Education (In East Africa)
Source: Pritchett and Banerji (2013, p. 13).

An Indian based non-governmental organisation (NGO) conducted a field experiment to test the hypothesis that more publicly available information about schooling for parents leads to improved educational outcomes. Pratham supported different types of advocacy campaigns in 190 of 280 villages in 2005 (Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster, & Khemani, 2007). The main objective was to communicate to village citizens the status of learning among their children and the potential roles that Village Education Committees and local governments could play to improve learning. The NGO held meetings in the villages with multiple stakeholders to report and discuss the literacy rates of 6 to 14 year olds in the community, and to urge stakeholders to ask questions about the invariably low

literacy rates. The question was: if you provide people with information that children in the community are not learning in school, does that information trigger the community to find local solutions to the learning problem. The study showed that sharing information about low learning levels by itself showed no effect on improving these learning levels. However, when the same information was combined with an education intervention where community volunteers were organized to run literacy classes with the Pratham methodology, there was an increase in the learning levels of the 6-14 year olds in the communities. This package (information and community based classes) showed improvement in the literacy among 6 to 14 year olds in the community as compared to only information provision (Banerjee et al., 2007).

In a similar vein, Panday, Goyal, & Sundaraman, (2011) test the premise that information campaigns targeted towards school committees will lead to improved awareness and participation in the school committee's oversight function and, consequently, improve teacher efforts and student outcomes. The campaign was conducted in three Indian states: Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (MP), and Uttar Pradesh (UP). Communities were randomly assigned to receive information on their oversight roles in local public schools. Baseline and follow-up surveys were administered to communities to measure outcomes. Focus group discussions were held with community members in UP and MP.[3] State specific information was disseminated in 11 to 14 public meetings in each treatment village over two-and-a-half years. Results from UP and MP showed that improved information to community members led to improved learning outcomes along with reduced teacher absenteeism and improved teacher efforts. School communities in the two states also became more active as shown by increases in the membership of the committees, number of committee meetings and school visits. Findings from Karnataka showed a more indirect effect of the intervention. Teachers with reduced efforts at baseline were more likely to be transferred out of schools in treatment villages. There was no impact on committee member participation in spite of an increase in knowledge. The authors stated that school committees in the state do not have any direct control over teacher efforts, unlike in the other two states. In terms of the learning outcomes, mathematics scores, however, tended to improve in all three states. The authors note that classroom-teaching practices that were not measured in the survey were likely to have been influenced by the survey. Focus group discussions in UP and MP illustrated that information campaigns led to significant improvements in the functioning of school committees and in teacher effort. More members reported awareness about school accounts and became aware of the roles and responsibilities of the committees.

Information to boost financial accountability in the education system

Has information provision improved school financing? One key study conducted by Reinikka and Svensson (2002), using Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) in Uganda, found that, on average, only 13 percent of the annual per-student (non-wage) grant from the central government reached the school between 1991 and 1995. Eighty-seven percent either disappeared for private gain or was used by district officials for purposes unrelated to education. The authors further contend that, in 1995, for every dollar spent by central government to support primary schools non-wage expenditures,

[3] The study cited that the focus group was not conducted in Karnataka due to reasons of limited resources.

the schools, on average, only received 22 cents. Four years later, in 1999, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports review found that the median school now received 90 percent of the capitation entitlement (Hubbard, 2007). Reinikka (2001) explained that in 1996 the Ugandan government actively implemented changes to increase public awareness and accountability by obliging all district headquarters and primary schools to post notices on public boards noting their monthly funds transfers. This was implemented since the information campaign and newspaper media coverage were a big part of the school grant (Hubbard, 2007). The 2002 PETS confirmed that more (80%) schools received the capitation grant. The survey also revealed that schools with access to newspapers now received an 8.68 percent greater share of their entitlement than schools that did not have access to newspapers (Hubbard, 2007). This case indicates that more public data and information about the grants schools received increased public awareness of "leakages" in the system and also significantly reduced "leakage".

India has legislated the public's right to knowledge about how funds are acquitted in the *Right to Information Act*. The *Act* empowers any Indian citizen to file an application with authorities to know where and how public funds are spent. Following the successful rollout of PETS in Uganda, the Tanzanian government adopted the PETS model and undertook two surveys in 1999, 2001, and a school pilot study in 2003 (Sundet, 2004). In Tanzania, PETS had a measure of success resulting in important data and key findings such as the need to advertise monetary transfers to the public, as financial accountability did not trickle down to district levels (Sundet, 2004). However, the robust discussion that materialised in Uganda with PETS was rather subdued in Tanzania; the anticipated large-scale public discussion and action on data, financial allocations, accountability, and transparency did not materialise (Sundet, 2004). Sundet (2004) emphasises that "information, education, and communication" (p. 4) must all work together for a successful PETS. Beyond PETS, Sundet (2004) notes the importance of civil society studies, training, monitoring, and initiatives that occurred in Tanzania. He emphasises that links between civil society organisations and government is the best approach. Organisations such as Twaweza[4] in Tanzania are actively advocating for open data systems.

Linking education outcomes to school financing represents a recent paradigm shift in education. The argument is that student outcomes should be closely associated with school finance. An important point to note, however, is that funding alone cannot make a difference; efficient allocation of funding matters (Pritchett & Filmer, 1999). It has taken many years to realise that school input-driven solutions do not, alone, improve student learning (Aiyar, 2013). Looking at outcomes and backtracking to see if school funding was a problem is a process adopted by multiple NGOs. For instance, Janaagraha, an NGO based in Bangalore, initiated the Public Record of Operations and Finance (PROOF) in July 2002 in partnership with three other[5] citizen-based organisations. This coalition of NGOs conducts site visits to the city schools and collects school performance indicators through questionnaires. Coordinators from the NGOs Janaagraha and Akshara compile this information into school report cards and share results with senior Education Department officials and school administrators. Programme coordinators then perform follow-up visits to schools to help them understand the scorecard, followed by additional

[4] For more information on Twaweza, visit http://twaweza.org/

[5] The other three organisations are 1. Public Affairs Centre (http://www.pacindia.org). 2. Voices (http://www.voicesofindia.org) 3. Centre for Budget, and Policy Studies (http://cbps.in).

school visits by senior Education Department officials. School visits sometimes result in immediate approval of school water facility and repair-work orders, depending on scorecard details. The programme coordinators help the schools update their budgets, then review budgets for the next financial year.

The idea underscoring this activity is matching the quality of education and teaching/learning materials supplied to the school with respective budgeted amounts. Thus, performance measurement is linked to the budget cycle, which demands more accountability. The process aims to understand the school system and its weaknesses, while using the idea of community ownership of the school to undertake reforms. This example highlights processes that help build community-based accountability measures around school functions. Through such efforts, municipal bodies (like schools) are asked to share details of their funding and are thus held accountable to ensure that they function in accordance with the funding received. Therefore, if children are not learning in school, it is not attributable to schools not receiving the funds on time, but because of other factors.

Data-driven decision-making

Picciano (2009) emphasizes "hardware, software, and people" (p. 123) as the essential base of DDDM and the development of information systems. Accessible information shared amongst stakeholders and their networks, combined with curated professional development can lead to, what Picciano (2009) terms, "collective behavior" (p. 127) yielding more productivity in analyzing data and making decisions. Use of software, integrated within a user-friendly platform for data presentation, analysis, and reporting, provides a combined relevant and holistic information system for DDDM when coupled with strong leadership. Although Picciano (2009) focuses on DDDM based on a school district information system, the DDDM is similar to Nigeria's CGS-LGA. The accessible integrated NMIS platform, continual training, emphasis on data analysis, importance of technical assistant leadership, and community input of CGS-LGA align with Picciano's (2009, p. 123) "hardware, software, and people".

Bettesworth, Alonzo, & Duesbery (2009) highlight the absolute need for educators to receive professional development on data analysis and use of data to improve DDDM. Professional development workshops should be collaborative and structured and combined with continual support beyond initial workshops (Bettesworth et al., 2009).

Data is abundantly available but the ability to undertake quality data analysis yielding reliable results and informed decision-making needs to be nurtured (Castellani & Carran, 2009). An accessible and integrated technological data platform is essential to DDDM. When combined with group teams, trainings, and leadership, it creates a climate of accountability and change (Castellani & Carran, 2009). An essential element to DDDM is knowledge management, which should entail "people, processes, and technology" (Castellani & Carran, 2009, p. 313). Sharing of information, teamwork, developing learning groups, and developing processes for data access, use, and analysis, as well as determining the array of technological components are steps both within the knowledge management cycle and CGS-LGA. Technology can vastly improve the DDDM process but not alone. Rather, it needs to be accompanied by leadership, professional development, accountability, and processes (Castellani & Carran, 2009).

Dunlap & Weber (2009) also emphasize that, in order to make better decisions, there is a need for leadership, training, monitoring, and the ability to reliably analyze and apply

data. Dunlap & Weber (2009, p. 452) find that to improve data use, it was necessary to ensure information on data definitions, have reliable data sources, and enable direct individual access to information. These three components were embedded into the NMIS platform accompanied by the provision of information during training sessions. Supovitz and Klein (2003) highlight the need for school commitments of "time, training, technology, and discipline" (p. 37) for informed data use. These four components are core elements of CGS-LGA.

The culture of use of data had to be developed amongst technical assistants, because it was a new endeavour. Recognition of the need and ability to navigate NMIS and analyze data responsibly using provided tools was a "cultural shift". Dunlap & Weber (2009, p. 452) highlight that such a "shift" is essential to enable commitment to DDDM. "Data literacy" (Hubbard, Datnow, & Pruyn, 2013, p. 54) is not a skill amongst all education professionals involved in using data, but developing it through teamwork and the sharing of information can lead to an improved skill set accompanied by leadership for an essential "shift" (p. 60) to occur.

Findings from Levin and Datnow's (2012, p. 185-86) study at a school in the United States point to four actions that guided DDDM: "curated goals according to needs, structures to guide DDDM, development of human and social capital, and a culture of data use and teamwork". These four points align with CGS-LGA's local level focus on data and technological tools, professional development, leadership, and building a culture of data use and teamwork amongst technical assistants. Additionally, Levin & Datnow (2012) found it was necessary to complement data with a comprehensive view of the situation. Coupling data and data analysis with local needs assessments is required for CGS-LGA proposal development in order to ensure a fuller perspective and presentation of local needs and gaps.

The use of data dashboards was found to be appealing and helpful for school staff to access data, making DDDM more user-friendly (US Department of Education, 2010). NMIS was designed to be user-friendly and features various visual displays, including maps and photographs, all accompanied by various planning tools. In Nigeria, use of a single technological platform (NMIS), professional development, tools, collective teamwork, building a culture of use of data, and combined leadership, led to a shift towards advanced skill sets in data analysis, improved DDDM, and continuous improvement of processes for determining appropriate local education interventions for education stakeholders and local governments. Linking data to points of improvement was obligatory because a premise of CGS-LGA was data-driven planning and decision-making.

However, simply developing a data system does not guarantee its use. Extra steps are required to digest data and apply it to make a difference in education practices and reforms. Studies show that information tends to lead to increased accountability, but more research is required on type of information, format and audience involved to make this happen. Development of a data system needs to be accompanied by trainings, which helps to ensure the education indicators and technological interface are understood. Data buy-in on the part of the OSSAP-MDGs staff plays a large part in the use of data for grant applications, providing a concrete platform and facilitating the process of data vetting and validation at the local level. Since applications are written at the local level, at the source of the data, the validation of the data is easier. Also, since the stakeholders (government agencies) at the local level are the ones that know what the sector needs, they can identify

funding gaps and use the data to validate grant requests. Therefore, creating platforms where the impact of the information is visible is central to ensuring that stakeholders use the data collected. The following sections provide background to the CGS-LGA project and present some weaknesses in the program that need further improvement.

METHODS

Tools, data collection, and indicators

As part of the process for developing CGS-LGA, it was determined an essential component would be to have a set of local-level data available to assess issues critical to primary and junior secondary education in LGAs. Initial steps included collaborative meetings between OSSAP-MDGs, sector specialists, and Earth Institute teams who, in concert, developed a baseline facility inventory. The inventory was also influenced by suggestions from local level education agencies. The baseline was formatted in a spreadsheet with syntax language compatible with two open-source tools used in the process, Formhub[6] and Open Data Kit Collect.[7] Through these tools, the baseline was uploaded to Android phones. Trained enumerators used the Androids to conduct both a pilot and the full baseline in the LGAs.

This mobile-based data collection method allowed for efficiency and development of technological skills amongst the technical assistants and enumerators. After collected data was uploaded to Formhub, data was cleaned then transformed for display onto NMIS. Additionally, data from two Nigerian institutions, the National Population Commission and the National Bureau of Statistics, was integrated into NMIS. In the version of NMIS at that time, there were ten education categories, including access, infrastructure, and participation, which had corresponding indicators. Complementing the data were various visual displays including maps and photographs. Materials to analyse data and support programme planning were developed by the education and health sector teams at The Earth Institute as tools to be applied in real-time by technical assistants. The data and tools are a complementary group of materials delineating relevant indicators and strategies and, when combined with a local assessment, guided selection of the most appropriate local education interventions.

Proposal development

An indicator definition list was created to support technical assistants in their understanding and application of the indicators. All indicators were grouped under the following categories: school enrolment; school continuation and completion; gender parity and equality; and literacy. Alongside, to aid planning and budgeting for tangible gaps, the following categories were included: infrastructure, furniture, teachers, and teaching materials and textbooks. A list of applicable indicators, ranges and targets coupled with Nigerian policy recommendations and strategies to improve the respective indicators were presented as education policy packages to serve as technical guidance.

The development of practical tools and trainings were key priorities set forth by The Earth Institute. Several training sessions were held in Abuja, Nigeria from 2011 through 2013, to present and transfer information to respective audiences, which, over the course of

[6] http://formhub.org/
[7] https://opendatakit.org/

training sessions included OSSAP-MDGs staff, zonal technical officers, technical assistants, field enumerators, sector experts, and LGA chairmen. With emphasis on data-driven methods informing primary and junior secondary education needs of the LGAs, the technical assistants became well positioned to continue building their skills in using mobile data devices, assessing needs, surveying, and identifying gaps. LGA proposal teams conducted needs assessments through community surveys, convened community stakeholder meetings, collected data from NMIS, and assembled data from their education sector gap worksheets, which highlighted service delivery gaps. With the resulting information and data from these sources, exercises, tools, and analysis, the LGA proposal team had a strong foundation to make informed decisions and begin development of their proposal.

Proposal review

From March to April 2013, representatives from OSSAP-MDGs and The Earth Institute comprised a committee who worked collaboratively through an organised, extended, and multifaceted process to technically vet 148 proposals for potential funding. Through well-supported information management systems, an online database was created by OSSAP-MDGs to retain and track all LGA requests via sector, intervention, location, quantity, and total amount requested. Scoring sheets were used by committee review members to score each intervention based on criteria. For instance, the education score was based on data, justification of prioritised interventions, and consistency with sector packages. The education technical review of the proposals was linked concurrently with review of LGA education gap sheets and indicators in NMIS, which functioned as references to contextualise the rationality of requested interventions.

Assessment of proposals was not only based on numerical scoring because comments and recommendations were also included. Each proposal received overall comments, implementation suggestions, intervention-specific comments, and a recommendation ranking for each requested intervention. After the proposal review was completed, a LGA summary report highlighting interventions, approval status, final comments, summary of the iterative review, strong and weak sections, and implementation recommendations were presented for final approval to senior team leaders from OSSAP-MDGs and The Earth Institute, who then made final determination on awarding CGS funding. The CGS-LGA proposal is a significant part of the robust CGS platform as it forms the pathway from contextualised needs to planning and implementation with simultaneous monitoring.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Use of data in proposals for 148 LGAs, March 2013

In the proposals for 148 LGAs reviewed in March 2013, many included data from NMIS and community needs assessments. Gaps were highlighted in tables and narrative, with some proposals providing description on how gaps could be addressed and be improved, and which partners could potentially provide funding support, such as Universal Basic Education Commission, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB),[8] and the Federal Teachers Scheme. Visuals, such as pie charts, photographs, and bar charts, were often added to the situation analysis section. Linking indicators together, such as net

[8] SUBEB is the state government agency responsible for all government primary schools in the state.

enrolment rates and gross enrolment rate with schools located 1km or 3km farther from catchment area, was presented in proposals. The LGA teams analyzed the available data in NMIS and the collected data from community assessments vis-à-vis the situation analysis and determined interventions for CGS-LGA funding. If proposals requested classroom repairs, included would be the indicator on repairs to verify the need and often pictures of classrooms in need of repairs in the schools in question. Each need had to be verified using indicators or external data sources. The identified needs and interventions were linked to school enrolment, completion, and continuation issues. Aside from the infrastructure, furniture, teaching staff and teaching material indicators, the ten most prevalent indicators used were: 1) net enrolment rate, 2) gender parity index, 3) farther than 1 km from the catchment area, 4) transition rate, 5) literacy rate, 6) students' living farther than 3 km, 7) functional library, 8) gross enrolment rate, 9) first aid kit, and 10) multi-grade classrooms. In the 148 LGA group of proposals, education interventions were requested and approved for implementation in the LGAs, with a portion as presented in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Sample requested and approved interventions, 148 LGAs proposal group, March 2013[a]

Infrastructure	School furniture	Teaching materials	Textbooks	Other
Construction of classroom blocks	Bench for pupils	School stationery	School textbooks	Campaigns
Renovation of classroom blocks	Dual desks for pupils	School exercise books	Training	Training/capacity building
Hand pump boreholes	Desk/chairs for teachers		School instructional materials	Motorbikes for school inspectors
Rainwater storage at schools	School chalkboard			First aid kits
VIP toilets in schools				

[a] Source: The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on MDGs. (2013) CGS LGA Programme Proposals, March 2013

CGS-LGA grant proposals were meant to present a complete funding plan at the LGA level. The proposals identified funding gaps and requests for funds that did not overlap with other existing funding sources. Essentially, CGS-LGA grant proposals became a useful tool for local-level planning operationalized by multiple stakeholder groups led by local technical assistants.

Gaps in data usage

Trainings on data use and proposal development were conducted with technical assistants in preparation for creating a strong proposal. While there were presentations on data use and opportunities for practical experience in small groups at trainings, the culture of use of data was new. Therefore, extra effort was taken to introduce multiple exercises in training to provide examples of data integration into proposals. Multiple case studies were used to highlight the importance of data. The writing of proposals was also new for some technical assistants who required additional guidance. Technical assistants could send

their proposals for quick feedback to the education sector team at The Earth Institute before commencement of the actual proposal review round.

In earlier rounds of proposal review for the 113 group in 2011, the indicators and the situational analysis did not seem to be connected or to narrate the same story. In most cases, indicators were included in the proposals; however, they were not linked to what was being asked or explained for the needs of LGAs. For the 148 group in 2013, there was tremendous progress, though linkage of data to contextual situations in the proposal could have been strengthened by describing, in-depth, why, for instance, a transition rate is low by linking it to the reasons why students drop-out or repeat.

NMIS did not include outcome-based indicators such as student learning, due to non-availability of such data on a country-wide scale. Therefore, most funds were delineated towards the purchase of tangible materials. However, proposals were reviewed based on their holistic approach to education involving tangible (materials focused) and intangible (quality education focused) investments. In most cases, the intangible investments were catered to by other funding sources. OSSAP-MDGs funds were top-ups to existing needs, rather than creating the needs. This approach had its downside where needs such as community campaigns for education were not among the majority of interventions requested for OSSAP-MDGs funding. Though the proposals mentioned the campaigns or community mobilisations as a part of education interventions funded by other sources (from LGA and the state), there could have been more emphasis. Continuous improvement to the culture of use of data by the technical assistants shifts to OSSAP-MDGs as they have taken full responsibility for the CGS-LGA proposal development and review process.

CONCLUSION

The use of a data-driven approach to education planning at the local level is a process that requires commitment from stakeholders. OSSAP-MDG's efforts are unique as they highlighted the dearth of data on schools at the national level and invested in creating a baseline facility inventory. They also conducted multiple training sessions with The Earth Institute to underscore the importance of using data in proposal and for local planning, and to encourage a move away from requests for funding based on anecdotal evidence. The training conducted to make NMIS easy to understand along with its user-friendly manuals were steps in the right direction. The use of Android phones drastically cut down data processing time. Maintaining an online repository of data that could be shared with all technical assistants and project staff facilitated the use of data in proposals. There were clear guidelines that proposals had to include the indicators needed to justify grant requests. Detailed planning at the LGA level was only possible if there was a common database with current indicators that all government levels were able to access at the same time. NMIS provided a platform to start discussion on education indicators. In cases where technical assistants had more updated data, these were used in the proposal and the source cited. With every round of proposals, quality improved. Use of indicators in combination with a situation analysis became well integrated to justify needs.

For The Earth Institute and OSSAP-MDGs, this data-driven planning has been a long process. It took many iterations and learning with each step. Tailoring training materials to needs of technical assistants and training on proposal writing improved over the course of three years. Technical assistants are now a cadre of professionals who can liaise with

multiple stakeholders at the local level to identify existing needs, gaps not funded by other agencies, and work together on a proposal validated by existing data at the local level. Multiple training sessions and customised exercises were used to conduct professional development sessions with technical assistants. Working with multiple stakeholders at the local level to identify funding gaps along with prioritising sector needs also required constant support from OSSAP-MDGs.

There are many processes that need improvement. For instance, the tendency to apply for material inputs for education that leave out interventions that improve quality education (e.g. teacher training) still needs to be addressed. Material procurement was more popular than recruiting teachers or conducting teacher training (also funded by the State and LGA). In a similar vein, community mobilisation was a recommended strategy; however, with no indicator to support, concomitant with difficulties in budgeting for such a campaign, it became difficult to request. Other data-related issues included coverage of the schools; that is, NMIS did not exhaustively cover all government-funded schools in the LGAs due to a number of logistical reasons. Therefore, technical assistants conducted their own community assessments or had to review each school on NMIS to use the data in the proposals. On the technology side, maintaining the data website and updating it has associated costs. Cleaning and data processing also took time and expertise. Debate can continue on the best operational indicators for NMIS to include. A set of indicators that will satisfy users at the local, state and federal levels for different needs will be difficult. NMIS currently is designed to best suit the needs of technical assistants for the CGS-LGA grant application. Though more fine-tuning of indicators and their definitions could help improve the version of NMIS used, it was a positive start to assess the status of basic school-related indicators on a national scale. Regardless of these challenges, NMIS holds a unique role providing the most updated nationwide data that different stakeholders can use to conduct local planning. Additionally, NMIS was updated in 2014 through a "data mop-up" process, a feedback mechanism was integrated into NMIS for user feedback, and updates are forecasted.

In August 2014, OSSAP-MDGs publically released NMIS, http://nmis.mdgs.gov.ng/. Different stakeholders, such as government agencies, community-based organisations, researchers, journalists, civil society members, and universities, can use the data for planning. This open source data has enhanced the potential to make more of an impact on education planning in Nigeria. With sparse and intermittent availability of basic multi-sectoral data in Nigeria, NMIS was able to fill the data gap. Design of policy approaches and programmes coupled with their implementation, such as OSSAP-MDGs' CGS-LGA are practical vehicles towards improvement of physical and quality components of schools. It serves as an interesting case study of a data-driven planning process that invites different stakeholders to create a common financing platform at the local level.

This Nigerian experience has been showcased as "best practice" in multiple Post-2015 discussion forums. Recently, the United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development showcased the Nigerian facility inventory in reports and events. This mapping of Nigeria's social infrastructure was also showcased by UNESCO's Broadband Commission for Digital Development[9]. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network also cited NMIS as one

[9] Full report available at http://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/reports/TF-Post2015-advocacy-2014.pdf

of their priority areas in terms of promoting geo-referenced data and integrating complementary facility based metrics into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) framework.[10] As a complement to the more traditional household survey based indicators, there is discussion on collecting regular facility (schools, health clinics, water points) based inventories as a part of the Post-2015 data priorities. Therefore many of the elements of this "real-time" data collection with the purpose of local level planning has potential of being scaled-up to other countries in the Post-2015 SDGs era.

The CGS-LGA policy focus on education planning at the local level via use of data, technology, professional development, tools, analysis, localized assessments, and technical expertise represents components that could be beneficial for DDDM efforts in varied settings. These include: 1) data collection using an Android phone for more efficient and seamless processing; 2) programmatic design focused on localized context and planning attuned to meeting particular needs; 3) imparting a culture of use of data amongst technical professionals through multiple workshops, tools, and supplementary material; 4) applicable supply-side education categories and indicators for comparative use; 5) technological platforms such as NMIS for spatial planning and Education Management Information System features; 6) local planning program design informative for philanthropic investments and international community projects; 7) partnership as fundamental and key aspect of realizing a program; 8) case study on local level data-driven education planning and decision-making; 9) professional development inclusive of presentations, practical exercises, group work, preliminary drafts, new skill sets; and 10) open-source data for varied purposes including access to information and accountability. Therefore, in the Post-2015 phase of the SDGs, NMIS provides a solid platform to measure, track and use indicators to meet social goals through an integrated multi-sectoral approach in order to facilitate reaching multiple targets of the SDGs.

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Australian Curriculum implementation in a remote Aboriginal school: A curriculum leader's search for a transformational compromise

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This paper examines the trial implementation of the Australian Curriculum in a remote Aboriginal school. It was a school that at the time was beginning to achieve successes with the development of dual-knowledge, transformational outcomes based curriculum that had its justification in the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework. Drawing on the work of van Manen (1990) this paper uses lived experience as the methodology. It deals with an early-career teacher's struggle to remain faithful to her employer-directed task of introducing the Australian Curriculum while providing space for the Aboriginal world the school had a responsibility to serve. The discussion is placed within the context of national curriculum development and implementation in Australia. In scrutinizing this teacher's experience, the paper attempts to examine the broad question of the capability of small schools serving Aboriginal communities to implement national curriculum reform. It then details the issue as not simply a question of compatibility and resourcing but also a complex one of ethics. The experience contributes to the field by highlighting the struggle faced by those teachers caught between governmental reforms and the desires of Aboriginal communities for meaningful inclusion of cultural content within the curriculum.

Keywords: Aboriginal education; national curriculum; lived experience; curriculum policy; curriculum implementation; cultural diversity

Comment:
This paper, drafted in 2013 for a panel discussion, does not claim to be any more than a reflective piece written by an early-career teacher. In hindsight, the experiences detailed below were formative in how I now view education and the position of teachers implementing national curriculum in schools that serve marginalised minority groups.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

There have been numerous attempts, over the past 35 years, by the Australian federal government to develop and implement a national curriculum. It was noted in: *A core curriculum for Australian schools: What it is and why it is needed,* a document produced by the Curriculum Development Centre (1980), that the notion of a national curriculum first emerged in Australia. The current move in Australia is relatively recent and can now be considered a success, though it has not been without contention (Harris-Hart, 2010).

The "education revolution" began with a change of federal government in 2007, and in early 2008 an interim National Curriculum Board was established (Brennan, 2011). Announced in May 2009 to replace the National Curriculum Board, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was given responsibility for the formation of a national curriculum, a national assessment program and national data collection (ACARA, 2011a). Two key documents: the *Melbourne declaration on education goals for young Australians* (2008); and the *Shape of the Australian curriculum* (2009), guided ACARA in this task. Endeavouring to support "all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens", the *Melbourne Declaration* (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) was endorsed by all Australian education ministers. The *Shape* documents further supported this vision, and guided the formation of the Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics, History and Science. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum v4.0* (ACARA, 2012a) was endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in late 2012, and provided the background for the development and implementation of the national curriculum and advice on meeting the needs of the diverse range of students in the Australian education system (ACARA, 2012b).

Set within three broad phases, the development of the Australian Curriculum (AC) is well underway: Phase 1, the development of the AC for English, Mathematics, Science and History (F-10 published 2010; 11-12 in development); Phase 2, the development of the AC for Geography, Languages and the Arts (in development from 2010); and Phase 3, the development of the AC for the remaining areas identified in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (in development from 2011) (ACARA, 2011b). Concurrent to ACARA's phases of development have been implementation time frames adopted by individual states and territories since 2011.

RATIONALE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Since federation in 1901, education is the responsibility of the states and territories. Traditionally, each state and territory has maintained its own public education system. State cultures within Australia have developed over time in education, with differing approaches to curriculum that respond to the vastly different histories, geographies and demographies of each of the states and territories (Yates, Collins & O'Connor, 2011). Originally extolled as a key advantage for the adoption of a national curriculum was the bringing into alignment those differences in school culture and organisations across the nation (Barr, 2010). It could be argued, however, that these differences established within state and territory systems, their schooling culture, organisation and curriculum were founded on an attempt to cater for the diversity found amongst the states and territories' own student populations. Ditchburn (2012) has critiqued the nature of the AC, stating,

> Disconnected from local realities, the Australian curriculum is being introduced as a decontextualised edifice, depersonalised and homogenized; it has eschewed the celebration of difference and adopted a one-size fits-all approach that appears to have been overwhelmingly accepted by the majority of educators and the wider Australian community (p. 259)

Others, too, have questioned how the AC will deal with the different educational needs of Indigenous schools and those of selective high schools in urban areas (Brennan, 2011).

Despite questions of contextuality, increasing standardisation within education has seen national approaches to assessment, curriculum, and reporting develop in education both locally and internationally. Federal standardisation interventions in education are often perceived as devices to increase national cohesiveness and consolidate multiculturalism, particularly in the area of curriculum (Symes & Preston, 1997). Harris-Hart (2010) comments that this is certainly the case in Australia where social cohesiveness has, over the past 35 years, been cited as an argument for the development of a national curriculum. Historically, education plays a key role in the transmission of "dominant social, cultural and political system[s] to young people, with the goal of creating a cohesive nation state" (Bromley, 2011, p. 152). Cornbleth (2000) comments that nation states are at risk of losing their cultural identities as population diversity increases due to globalisation. With mass education operating as a key means of nation-building through the transmission of a national persona and socialisation for citizenship, the renewal of nation-building efforts through public education respond to this diversification of populations.

National cohesiveness, however, is just part of the rationale for national curriculum; it sits within the broader issue of the construction of a national policy space in education. Economic interests have a very significant impact on federal concerns within the education system in a neo-liberal global economy. In Australia, education policies have been economised as a result of this neo-liberal global economic climate, with schools being viewed as a means of producing a skilled workforce capable of serving the national economic need (Cornbleth, 2000; Lingard, 2010). The supporting of educational development by the state is crucial within the current global economic market, because education and skills are necessary for the mass labour force and, therefore, the global economy (Olssen, 2004). This international trend within the field of education now uses human capital and productivity rationales as well as economic restructuring as the metapolicy behind education policy reform (Lingard 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Considering context

The Northern Territory (NT) offers a unique educational landscape in terms of geography and student demographic in which to consider national curriculum implementation. Government school locations are classified as provincial (Darwin and Palmerston schools), remote (Alice Springs and Katherine schools) and very remote (all other NT schools). At the time of writing, there are approximately 150 government schools and 40 Homeland Learning Centres across the NT (NTG, 2009a). A relatively small number of 33,141 students were enrolled across the NT in 2012 (NTG, 2009b). Of these students, 47.35 percent are enrolled in remote or very remote locations, and 44.55 percent recognise themselves as Indigenous (NTG, 2009b). According to the Northern Territory Department of Education, 85 schools of the 188 government and non-government schools across the territory have nearly 100 percent Indigenous enrolment (NTG, 2009a). The NT has the highest percentage of Indigenous people out of all other Australian states and territories (30% compared with 4% or less) (ABS, 2012).

With this high percentage of Indigenous students within the state education sector, the Northern Territory Department of Education offers Indigenous Languages and Culture as a subject area within the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) (NTDEET, 2002). Three main sub-sections found within the Indigenous Languages and Culture subject are: culture, language maintenance and language revitalisation. Under the NTCF,

Indigenous Languages and Culture can be taught from Transition (the equivalent of Prep in other states and territories) through to the senior years of schooling.

SHIFTING APPROACHES TO ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

The introduction of the AC in the NT will see a shift in approaches to the teaching of Aboriginal knowledge and culture—from a unit of study or separate subject within the NTCF to a cross-curricular priority to be interwoven throughout the AC. It is yet to be seen how the system and schools will respond to this change. According to the Northern Territory Department of Education, the NTCF Indigenous Language and Culture learning area is required to be used by teachers until it is replaced by the relevant AC learning area or subject (NTG, 2009c). Whether a part of the future curriculum or not in its present form, it will still be necessary for teachers to respond to the cross-curricular priorities and embed them within subject areas.

According to ACARA, the presence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority within the AC will vary depending on relevance (ACARA, n.d.). This risks Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures being taught within a multicultural education framework that could potentially trivialize cultural artifacts and do little to explore the fundamentally different knowledge systems and philosophies of cultures (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). While cross-curriculum priorities, competencies and capabilities are an important educational intention; they are not necessarily always translated to a programmatic learning reality (Dellit, 2001). Teachers will, ultimately, be responsible for selecting when, how and to what extent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are included in the curriculum; further development is required in this area. As Nakata (2011) states:

> There is nothing ahead but the real work of curriculum development. Content needs to be selected and placed where it fits . . . How it is taught and how it is used to develop awareness of Indigenous experience for all students, and how it is used in the education of Indigenous students require further attention and development . . . the real work is not yet done (p.7-8).

In the absence of explicit direction or strategies from ACARA as to how teachers include this cross-curricular priority, Rigney (2011) offers a model for incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The first step for teachers is to determine if there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective—Rigney notes that, at times, there will not be. In his advice to teachers, Rigney cautions against forcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the curriculum, as it can "lead to tokenism and trivialisation and does not honour Indigenous cultures or the learning area" (p. 15). When placed in a position of teaching AC content to Aboriginal children, however—and in a community keen on the transmission of local culture and knowledge through formal schooling—the approach needs to differ. Teachers in remote Aboriginal communities, such as those detailed below, need to embed Aboriginal knowledge and culture into the curriculum in order to at least minimally satisfy Article 14 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, particularly Article 14.3:

> States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

For Aboriginal students, integrating meaningful links to children's own experiences and cultural capital can assist in acting as a hook for learning the standard curriculum offering (Nakata, 2011). Nakata (2011) comments that the use of familiar content and examples are critical in conceptual development, but teachers have to ensure that students are then "taken on to make the connections to the wider curriculum content . . . and delve into deeper and more abstract learning" (p. 5). In these markedly different teaching and learning contexts, multiple approaches to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curricular priority are necessary under the AC. How teachers will approach the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curricular priority in different educational contexts across Australia is yet to be seen.

FROM A TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE…

It was within this broader educational policy reform context that my teaching career in a remote Aboriginal community began. It was a time of national curriculum development but such development appeared unlikely to concern me. Discussions were beginning to be had by stakeholders across the country but I had little exposure to the complexities of curriculum formation.

I arrived at my first school in Elliott, in the NT, some 750 kilometres south of Darwin, in 2010 as a graduate teacher. Believing I was prepared both professionally and culturally for the challenge of remote teaching and living, I saw it as an opportunity to enter the profession and gain valuable teaching experience. I found myself with brilliant young colleagues but there were community tensions, the principal was ill and the school was struggling on all fronts.

Six months into my appointment, a new principal arrived. He announced his doctorate was about negotiated curriculum. He was convinced of the value of dual-knowledge systems in schools and said he would push the school as close to Harris's (1990) *Two Way Education* as the Northern Territory Department of Education would allow. He wanted to exploit to the full NTCF to achieve Spady's (1994) school-based transformational outcomes curriculum. He explained that he planned to apply a mission-based management approach to the school's operation and devolve responsibility for projects within the school on the basis of interest and capability. On this foundation, he set out to realign the school's relationship with its Aboriginal community.

When the departmental requirement to trial the new AC arrived, he saw it as a distraction from the main game of creating a dual-knowledge transformational outcomes-based curriculum. He decided to focus on what he had begun and passed responsibility for the AC to me with the proviso that I explore opportunities for continued dual-knowledge and VET-based programs, such as the horsemanship/rural operations endeavour. At the time, I saw my role as primarily managing the trial of the AC in my Middle Years classroom, but the principal, who had a passion for staff development, saw my interest in curriculum and sought to foster my skills in the school-wide management of this area.

When the AC trial started, we had spent over 12 months developing the school's dual-knowledge curriculum. The vision of our curriculum innovation was presented to the local community and the Education Department's higher management in *Elliott School and the Longreach Waterhole* in Term 4, 2011 (Duffy, 2011). The school was seeing

positive results with increased student engagement, as well as higher levels of community involvement as a consequence of the dual-knowledge and contextual approach. We welcomed the increased presence of parents and community leaders into the school, and did not want to jeopardise the work already achieved for the sake of a mandated national curriculum.

The trialling of the AC required me to mesh together two very different curriculum documents—one being content driven and the other outcomes-based—while attempting to retain the valuable programs already developed that sought to capitalize on Elliott's local context. In my own classroom, my team teacher and I sought to continue our dual-knowledge ethos and created units of work for Australian Curriculum Mathematics and English that aligned to the school-wide "Caring for Country" environmental science theme already in place. With the support of the Indigenous Language and Culture teacher and key community members, we continued to spend at least one day per week at the local billabong. This provided a teaching space which offered a place where both western and Aboriginal knowledge could be taught in unison.

Upon self-assessing, I was pleased with my management of the AC trial. Neither students nor community members noticed a change in curriculum delivery. We maintained our pedagogical styles and adapted programs to conform as far as possible to the AC documentation. We rearranged lesson content to suit both our unique context and the AC requirement to match content to age and grade. The trial, however, was not an easy task, and carried practical, philosophical and ethical complexities, including incongruence of design and use, the adaption to multi-grade and English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) context, assessing against mainstream standards and the privileging of particular content within curriculum.

I was to teach my students content and skills that "all young Australians should learn", despite my students having dramatically different ontologies and epistemologies to those that could be termed "mainstream students" (ACARA, 2012b). I felt the mandating of such a curriculum did nothing to acknowledge the context of our remote Aboriginal community and the unique set of skills and knowledge that my students would need to live at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007), moving between both Aboriginal and "white fella" worlds.

I believed in the importance of the school's vision and mission of equipping our students with the necessary skills and knowledge to operate at the cultural interface (Baker, 2010):

> **Vision statement**
> Our vision for Elliott School is of a small school catering for students from preschool to grade 12 using a mix of traditional and innovative pedagogy to make it possible for children and young people from Elliott to match the achievements of their peers from metropolitan Australia while gaining an appreciation of their place within Aboriginal Culture and society.
>
> **Mission statement**
> The mission of Elliott School is to provide an education to the young people of Elliott that will equip them with the capacity to function at levels of their own choosing in the Australian economy and to contribute some of the knowledge and skills required to explore their Aboriginal heritage and their place in it.

I felt that the AC trial could be reconciled with this so long as staff remained vigilant in maintaining the school's vision and mission. If not, the efforts of the school to assist community leaders in widening the students' appreciation of their place within Aboriginal culture and society could easily be overridden. I had to attempt the trial at a time when there was increased scrutiny of the school by both the Regional Education Office and the local community. I was under pressure to produce mainstream test results and local Aboriginal relevance. It was not an easy position to be in.

Practical issues affecting day-to-day programming included the incongruence of the design and use of the AC found during the trial. Understandably, designed for mainstream contexts where students are traditionally organised by year level, the AC did not easily adapt to a multi-grade context in which I had students ranging from Years 5 to 10 in the one classroom. I saw this issue would only become more difficult to address with the introduction of other AC subjects, particularly history, where the interrelated strands may provide linkages across year levels but the content does not. There was little information available as to how to approach the complexities of delivering the AC in a multi-grade classroom, particularly one in which all students had EAL/D. It was not until later that I saw my own frustrations were recognised by others, with Brennan (2011) commenting that the AC, in its design, fails to recognise "the existence of P-12 or area schools, multi-age classrooms or settings which are largely Indigenous" (p. 267).

In the short term, this lack of understanding on how to approach the AC in a multi-grade setting worked in my favour during the trial. I was able to select content descriptors that I deemed appropriate to our whole-school theme of "Caring for Country" and teach these at varying levels to the class. Many, familiar with the English AC, would find the number of content descriptors I selected laughable: three. Of course, this was not at all realistic in attempting to cover the entire English curriculum over the year when Year 1, for example, has 34 content descriptors. Nevertheless, I selected just one content descriptor from each of the sub-strands (Literacy, Language and Literature) for the term focus. Many others were present in our everyday teaching and learning but at levels far below the expected standard for each year level.

We experienced additional practical issues with assessment because my team teacher and I were to deliver AC content in Mathematics and English but assess using the NTCF, an outcomes-based document. In the end, it meant little change to the reporting of student progression, which was a welcomed reprieve from what I saw as a major future issue: the assessing of students using the AC A to E assessment scale. I voiced my concerns to staff that the implementation of this scale would see potentially all of Elliott School failing. This could be highly problematic because, without additional tools to assess and measure outcomes, it would be difficult for teachers to monitor progression. I also believed this method of reporting, in a context where many students were not meeting minimum national standards, had the potential to further alienate students from schooling.

Despite the practical issues experienced, initial staff reactions (communicated at weekly staff meetings and discussions) to the trial were relatively positive; it seemed that, with enough flexibility, the AC could be moulded to fit our dual-knowledge approach to curriculum. I asserted that the practical concerns, however, that impinged upon day-to-day practice, including multi-grade adaptation, EAL/D approaches and assessment methods, would only become more challenging with full implementation if there was a

lack of direction and staff development. I was concerned the AC did not suit the context in which I was teaching.

My work in Term 4, 2011 in implementing the AC trial saw me promoted to Curriculum Leader. This was a federally funded position designed to assist schools in managing curriculum change. Some would argue, and perhaps I would be amongst them, that this, too, was problematic and is indicative of another issue in remote schools. At a time when I was advocating an increase in training and development to implement the AC, myself as an early-career teacher was tasked with the role of providing it. At the end of Term 4, 2011, with the current principal being seconded elsewhere and my team teacher promoted into the role of acting principal, I was excited about my new role within the school leadership team but also apprehensive as to how much could be achieved. I was to design a school-based curriculum that was appropriate to our school's vision and mission and that met the directive to implement AC Mathematics and English while also dealing with the issues described above.

…TO A CURRICULUM LEADER'S EXPERIENCE

The school's staffing and management arrangements for 2012 meant I was not implementing the AC in my own classroom. This gave me the ability to maintain some distance from the fundamental changes I was causing in the school's teaching and learning environment. Despite the distance, I was acutely aware of the need to streamline the change process as much as possible to avoid placing unnecessary stress on staff, who were already dealing with the day-to-day challenges of remote teaching and living that are highlighted elsewhere (Lock, Budgen, Lunay, & Oakley, 2012; Starr & White, 2008).

When faced with a choice between designing school-based curriculum and implementing the pre-packaged Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) imported from Queensland, I chose to continue on the journey of our school-based approach. I selected a theme for each term, which were school-wide, and provided enough scope for our Indigenous Language and Culture teacher to link subject area content to local culture and knowledge. The teaching of Aboriginal knowledge and culture remained, to a large extent, in the Indigenous Language and Culture teacher's domain, although staff worked to ensure local linkages were interwoven throughout the curriculum.

It was in this role that I saw the opportunities for the integration of Aboriginal knowledge and culture across the curriculum because the Indigenous Language and Culture teacher shared more of the local language and culture with not only students but also with non-Aboriginal staff. She was on a learning journey herself and was leading a cultural revitalisation within the community. At the same time, I saw that, despite these opportunities for integrating Aboriginal knowledge and culture across the curriculum, staff were limited in doing so without the knowledge, direction and support of the Indigenous Language and Culture teacher who was so vital in this process. I also believed that, in future, when faced with the pressures of additional AC subjects being implemented, staff would struggle to find room for meaningful examinations of local Aboriginal knowledge and culture within the content-heavy curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

As Semester 1, 2012 progressed I became increasingly uncomfortable with my role in implementing the AC. The dilemmas I faced were operational and ethical. In looking for answers, all that appeared were more questions, the most pertinent I felt were: Was AC reform within the capability of small multi-age/multi-grade isolated schools serving Aboriginal communities? Whose knowledge systems are privileged in the national curriculum? How can the knowledge of minority cultures find a place within the dominant system? Is it ethical for the dominant culture to mandate the learning requirements for all? And how does any of this sit with Article 14 of the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*?

I began a PhD with the University of New England to investigate the Indigenous education discourses being privileged or marginalised within the AC, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodology, and how they correlate with the discourses Aboriginal community members draw upon to express their educational aspirations for their children. In continuing my own learning journey, I hope to address at least some of the above questions and add to national curricula discussions that not only hold relevance in Australia but also in settler nations internationally.

In 2013 I concluded that it may be timely for those involved with the design and production of the AC to look again at how they are addressing the question of providing space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and issues within it. Given, too, that in the current climate, Aboriginal children will inevitably be taught by non-Aboriginal teachers there needs to be developed ways in which teachers can come to terms with the delivery of the AC in an Aboriginal context.

Final note

Some 24 months after constructing this piece it is quite a challenge to read. It is what it is—a reflective piece written at a particular time in my very early career for the purpose of a panel discussion, to stimulate thinking about what it means to be a non-Indigenous teacher injected into a remote Aboriginal community and school, and the practicalities and ethics involved in delivering a national curriculum designed by the dominant culture. I recognize that it is problematic in that it lacks an Indigenous voice. But such is the nature of lived experience in presenting just one perspective at a particular time. As I develop into a critical researcher, naturally that perspective evolves as does my understanding of research with Indigenous peoples. I am indebted to the people of this community and those that guide me for sharing different worldviews and understandings as I continue to learn.

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Teacher retention in refugee and emergency settings: The state of the literature

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Teacher quality is recognised as a primary driver of variation in student learning outcomes, particularly in refugee and emergency settings, but few studies have examined the factors that motivate or demotivate teachers in these contexts. In this article we use secondary source materials from academic experts and grey literature from United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organisations to identify seven key areas that affect teacher retention in such contexts: teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment; the teaching environment; certification; professional development; incentives; management structures; and status and social recognition. Further, we identify critical gaps in the literature surrounding refugee teachers and their retention and suggest specific areas for further research.

Keywords: literature review; teacher retention; teacher quality; teacher motivation; refugee settings

INTRODUCTION

Few studies have examined the factors that motivate or demotivate teachers in refugee and emergency settings. Even in the world's best school systems, the quality of the teacher is a primary driver of variation in student learning outcomes (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2007). How much more important, then, are teachers in under resourced school systems?

Our approach to this study is grounded in Amartya Sen's notion of human development as the expansion of freedoms that strive to remove barriers to access and equity. Within the education sector, teachers are critical to removing challenges of inequitable access and protecting education for all. With this belief, we examined secondary source materials and solicited feedback from established international education experts as to what may influence the retention or attrition of good teachers in refugee settings. Seven key themes emerged as influential in teacher retention and attrition and formed the basis of our conceptual framework: (1) teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment; (2) the teaching environment; (3) certification; (4) professional development; (5) incentives; (6) management structures; and (7) status and social recognition. In this article we discuss these seven components and the ways in which they motivate or demotivate teachers in refugee and emergency contexts.

According to the 1951 *Convention on the status of refugees* and its 1967 *Protocol*, a "refugee" is a person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons

of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." Over time, this definition has come to include persons fleeing the general effects of armed conflict and/or natural disaster. It is critical to note that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not considered refugees and do not have special status under international law, as they have not crossed an international border and thus remain the responsibility of their country. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) defines IDPs as "persons forcibly displaced from their homes who cannot or choose not to cross a border, are not considered refugees, even if they share many of the same circumstances and challenges as those who do."

As a result of man-made crises, conflicts or natural disasters (e.g., often termed "emergencies" within international humanitarian and development sectors), UNHCR´s mandate may extend beyond the protection and management of assistance to refugee and stateless populations to include IDPs as part of humanitarian relief and response efforts. In recent years, for example, UNHCR's experience in protecting refugees and managing large-scale assistance efforts has been leveraged to oversee the protection and shelter needs of IDPs. For the purposes of this paper, however, the authors focus mainly on refugees and not IDPs.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a review of more than 175 secondary source materials and grey literature from leading United Nations (UN) agencies and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). We interviewed 13 international education experts, all of whom provided additional articles, publications, and documents to strengthen our review of the key research. The documents identified through this process include the work of government donors; UN agencies; international, regional, and local NGOs; and academics. We also conducted literature searches using *Google/Google Scholar* and *Expanded Academic Search Complete*.

LIMITATIONS

Although it is widely understood that teachers are fundamental to the delivery of high-quality education, few studies to date have examined their role in refugee and emergency contexts (Penson, Yonemura, Sesnan, Ochs, & Chanda, 2011). In particular, there is a dearth of peer-reviewed, evidence-based literature on teacher retention in refugee contexts—a fact that is well documented (Bennell, 2004; Mulkeen, 2010; Penson et al., 2011). Much of the work that does exist on refugee teachers is anecdotal in nature.

Sesnan, Allemano, Ndugga, and Said (2013) note that "there are few studies on refugee teachers" and that the majority of "published studies and reports on education in emergencies deal with children. This lack is important for all stakeholders involved in education in emergencies and refugee education" (p. 4). The literature that does concentrate on teachers focuses almost exclusively on those who teach in refugee camps or settlements, and "very little is known about those refugees who are living in urban

areas or displaced internally" (Rose, 2011, p. 186). As Mulkeen notes, this general lack of information and substantive research on teacher retention globally has resulted in data that are "limited in scope and reliability" (2010, p. 2). Given the relative scarcity of research on this topic, we adopted a broad approach when reviewing the literature on teacher retention challenges. We did not distinguish between primary and secondary school teacher retention, and (although we recognise the distinction) we did not examine teacher migration and teacher attrition separately but instead addressed them collectively as teacher turnover (or, the opposite of retention).

TEACHING IN REFUGEE AND EMERGENCY CONTEXTS

Although teacher retention is a challenge in developed, developing, and refugee and emergency contexts, it is especially complex in the latter circumstances. In traditional settings, teachers do not face the political, economic and logistical constraints of a humanitarian crisis. UNHCR funding for education in emergencies is limited; mobilizing teachers and teaching and learning materials must compete with food, shelter, water and sanitation in any relief and response effort. In protracted emergency settings, low quality education standards are often accepted as donor governments prioritise funding responses to newer emergencies over existing ones. In addition, teachers recruited or deployed to teach refugee children may be the only literate adults in a community ravaged by the effects of war; certification and professional development are challenging; curriculum and management structures within an education setting vary and are driven by an NGO, the UN or the local government (sometimes simultaneously). Finally, the value of education (and teachers, specifically) may not be fully understood within a community and incentives for teachers are often non-existent and compete with other livelihood opportunities.

During periods of instability, education is frequently manipulated by those seeking power or legitimacy because of the wider role it plays in nation-building and identity formation (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2011; Novelli, 2011; Smith, 2010). In Sierra Leone, for example, elitist, geographically unequal public education systems with weak infrastructure and service delivery became a catalyst for the eruption of conflict, while in Lebanon a highly segregated education system based on sectarian divides exacerbated communal tensions, exclusion, and discrimination (Novelli & Smith, 2011). In Nepal, education has been used as a tool to nationalize inequality where only those loyal to the monarchy were insiders (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). In numerous emergency and conflict settings around the world, the bias, hatred, and militarization found within education systems, as well as the content and curriculum delivered in these environments, have driven teachers away from schools.

Refugee and emergency settings present a particular challenge to recruiting and retaining a teaching force. As the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) reported in 2006:

> Teachers are frequent targets in fragile states and countries affected by conflict, where repressive regimes often regard education as a threat to their power or as a tool for indoctrination . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that in these instances teachers are in short supply. (p. 20)

Female teachers, in particular, are underrepresented in many conflict and emergency settings (especially in rural areas), largely because of safety considerations and cultural

practices (Bennell, 2004; GCE, 2006). The World Bank (2010) also found that acute teacher shortages continue to persist in *post* crisis environments.

In refugee and emergency contexts, where teaching materials, classroom space, and furniture are all in short supply, and curriculum quality is inconsistent, the World Bank (2010) notes "teachers are sometimes the only resource available to students" (p. 3). Indeed, a frequently referenced report argues that even in the world's best performing school systems, the quality of the teacher is the main driver of variation in student learning outcomes (Mourshed et al., 2007). Despite this, however, investments in teachers—other than professional development and training interventions—receive less focus and support than achieving universal primary education, early childhood education, life skills for youth, and adult literacy (i.e., the MDGs and EFA priorities) (GCE, 2006). Furthermore, efforts to improve education policy often do not delineate practical methods and steps for changing the status quo for teachers (Bennell, Buckland & Mulkeen, 2009; World Bank, 2010).

Last, it is important to note the distinction between, and relative importance of, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for teachers, which vary significantly across developed, developing, and refugee and emergency contexts. To be sure, motivation levels vary in all settings; however, a number of authors point to the importance of extrinsic factors in maintaining teacher motivation in the long term (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Guajardo, 2011; Voluntary Service Overseas [VSO], 2002). To this end, VSO (2002) reports the following:

> In all countries, there are teachers for whom teaching is a vocation, who have intrinsic high levels of commitment to the teaching profession. There are also those who have never wanted to be teachers and have no commitment to the job. The majority, though, lies somewhere in between. They wish to remain in teaching and want to do a good job, but their motivation and thus their performance is critically influenced by the extent to which their situation supports and enables them. (p. 18)

1. Teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment

The data on teacher attrition are weak and often anecdotal, as evidenced by a review of the literature by the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (Teachers for EFA, 2010). Without data that track categories of teachers, subject specialization, ethnic/linguistic/religious backgrounds, and reasons for leaving the profession, we know very little about how to effectively recruit, select, and deploy teachers in any setting, and in emergency settings in particular (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). While teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment have been studied rigorously in developed nations—and to a slightly lesser extent in developing nations—there is a paucity of literature on this subject in refugee or emergency contexts.

It is well documented that a lack of transparency in teacher recruitment and selection processes demotivates potential teachers (Bennell, 2004; INEE, 2011). As the INEE (2011) notes: "Teacher recruitment and placement can create or exacerbate tensions if not performed in a non-discriminatory, participatory, and transparent manner" (p. 5). In the worst scenarios, individuals pay bribes to school officials to secure teaching posts, resulting in a pool of teachers who "do not feel accountable to school management, parents, or the wider community" (Bennell, 2004, p.11).

Shepler (2010), the World Bank (2010), and Moulton and Dall (2006) all note that we know very little about how to effectively (re)build a teaching corps in emergency settings and that we have limited understanding of the factors that influence the participation (or not) of would-be teachers within any given context. With regard to recruiting and selecting teachers, there is consensus in the existing literature that most host countries do not have a systematic process for identifying refugee teachers or those refugees who have become teachers in the host country (Penson & Sesnan, n.d.; Sesnan et al., 2013).

Another recruiting challenge in the refugee and emergency context is the frequent reality of scarce resources, violence, and insecurity (INEE, 2011; Novelli, 2011; Smith, 2010) as well as the need to deploy teachers to remote areas (Bennell, 2004). In addition, high attrition rates often increase pressure on recruitment efforts. Chapman (1994) argues that there is a critical relationship between preparation and retention and that recruiting unqualified teachers (and not preparing them adequately) ultimately leads to higher levels of teacher turnover: "Many countries [have] accepted unqualified teachers into the teaching force just to put an adult in each classroom . . . These teachers are likely to have higher turnover due to their poor preparation" (p. 12).

2. Teaching environment

Despite widespread agreement that working conditions are a critical factor in retaining teachers (Bennell, 2004; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007), Cooper and Alvarado (2006) maintain that working conditions are rarely examined systematically and that efforts to improve teaching environments are minimal. Similarly, Bennell (2004) notes that "time series data is urgently needed that can track changes in working and living conditions [for teachers]" (p. 13).

Ensuring safe, comfortable schools with sound infrastructure is difficult in a refugee camp, and this can influence teacher motivation. Safety is a persistent challenge in many refugee settings, and high levels of public or interpersonal threats—due to the involvement of non-state-armed actors, military, or police—can drive both teachers and students away from schools (INEE, 2011; Novelli, 2011; Smith, 2010). The challenges that hinder the creation of effective teaching environments (specifically related to school infrastructure) are widespread in refugee and emergency settings. Following the war in Sierra Leone, for example, the destruction of 1,854 primary schools and damage to an additional 815 schools, has led to a serious overcrowding problem that impacts both students and teachers (Harding & Mansaray, 2006). The resulting high pupil-teacher ratio has led not only to a cramped physical environment but also to a heavier workload for teachers (Harding & Mansaray, 2006).

In addition to infrastructure and physical environment concerns, excessive workload also reduces teacher satisfaction and increases the risk of teachers leaving the profession (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Bennell and Akyeampong's (2007) study in 12 countries revealed that workload (measured in terms of number of pupils and working hours) was a critical motivating or demotivating factor, and in China, Sargent and Hannum (2005) found that "heavy workloads diminish teachers' job satisfaction" (p. 181). Other obstacles include excessively high student-teacher ratios and the impact of HIV and AIDS and other infectious diseases (Stewart, 2008; Østby, 2008). As the World Bank (2010) notes: "Teacher motivation is strongly related to working and living conditions. If teachers work and live in an environment where they consistently have insufficient resources to accomplish what is expected of them, they can grow increasingly de-motivated" (p. 22).

This is certainly the case for teachers in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, where overcrowded classrooms and a high number of over-age pupils add to teachers' stress levels and these factors, according to Gomez (2013b), "will continue to push teachers out of the profession and drive down conditions for quality teaching and learning if not addressed" (p. 29).

Finally, the psychological trauma that may accompany violent conflict can negatively impact teachers and, in turn, their ability to fulfil their teaching responsibilities (Penson & Sesnan, n.d.). As Penson and Sesnan (n.d.) have noted, "Refugee teachers may face sudden, major, unpredictable, and uncontrollable changes in their circumstances. Such experiences are likely to erode refugees' resilience, as they undermine coping strategies" (p. 3). Crisp, Talbot, and Cipollone (2001) report that "teachers are also affected by the chaos and turmoil of refugee life, and may need psycho-social work in addition to more conventional pedagogical training" (p. 100). In addition to suffering psychological disruption or trauma themselves, many refugee teachers face the added challenge of teaching students in serious emotional distress:

> Teachers felt that they lacked the competence and resources to meet the psychosocial needs of the recently traumatised students. They were uncertain how to cope with incidents of violence in the classroom linked to the newly arrived students, and noted that the admission of these students could revive feelings of trauma among fellow students. (Crisp et al., 2001, p. 64)

Feeling ill equipped in this regard (and thus less effective) potentially demotivates teachers.

3. Certification

The literature on certification in developing, refugee, and emergency contexts underscores its importance as a tool with which to motivate teachers. As Brown (2001) explains,

> A certificate is just a piece of paper and is very cheap to produce. Yet, because of what it represents, it can have an enormous effect on the recipient, in terms of self-esteem, motivation and hope for the future regarding job prospects. (p. 153)

Kirk and Winthrop (2007) echo this sentiment, adding that a pathway to certification is the primary means by which teachers are connected to the broader institutional environment. The INEE (2003) argues that certification is just as important as teacher training and that it plays a critical role in the education system: "It can represent an important investment of the teacher's time and limited family resources. If accreditation does not occur the investment is lost—both for the teacher and for the educational system" (p. 1). It is important to note that while the portability of *student* credentials in refugee and emergency settings has been studied fairly extensively, very little research has been done on the cross-border portability of teacher credentials (Penson et al., 2011). Kirk (2009) notes that many of the same issues apply to both students and teachers, although her work focuses almost exclusively on cross-border recognition of student qualifications.

The certification process and associated challenges for teachers in refugee and emergency settings are quite different from those in developed countries. Refugee teachers' credentials are often not recognised by the host country, which means these individuals cannot be employed formally as teachers or receive the corresponding compensation.

Additionally, some countries only recognise another country's qualifications if physical evidence of the qualifications can be produced. This presents an obvious problem for teachers in emergency settings who have valid qualifications but did not bring physical copies with them when fleeing their country of origin (Penson & Sesnan, n.d.).

Compounding this issue is the lack of access to certification for interested refugee teachers. For example, Brown (2001) writes that although Bhutanese refugee teachers in Nepal "work hard, gain valuable experience, and receive a lot of non-formal training in the camps, they end up with no official qualification" (p. 144). Similarly, Gomez (2013) writes that in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, "Portable certification is a top priority for refugee teachers; however, the majority of refugee teachers are ineligible for admission to higher education institutions and require alternative qualification options" (p. 3). Even if a refugee teacher is able to obtain qualifications while living in the host country, there is no guarantee that these will be recognised in his or her country of origin upon return. Penson and Sesnan (n.d.) note: "there is no comprehensive system of certifying teacher qualifications outside of refugees' home countries" (p. 9).

4. Professional development

Extensive research has been undertaken in developed countries on how the various components of professional development influence education quality and teacher retention, yet little has been written on how the effects of professional development are influenced by context. Johnson (2006) argues that professional development should be based on the context in which teachers work and that it should account for factors such as the availability of equipment and support mechanisms for teachers. This seems reasonable given that 10 percent of the working day is devoted to professional development in high-performing systems (Mourshed et al., 2007) while in developing countries it is rare or ad hoc and often not included in budgets or planning (Mpokosa, Ndaruhutse, McBride, Nock, & Penson, 2008).

The existing research underscores the importance of a teacher's first years of teaching. It highlights providing support for the initial transition from a teacher's education to induction and to ongoing professional development as a way to promote the retention and development of effective teachers (GCE, 2006; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2005). Providing support for new teachers, and ongoing support for veteran teachers, is often a challenge in refugee and emergency settings. There is limited available literature on professional development in refugee and emergency settings, although the challenges in these contexts are similar to those in developing countries (Sullivan, 2013). As such, many teacher-training programmes in these contexts are based on anecdotal evidence of poor teaching practices and rote methodology (Spink, 2004).

In refugee and emergency settings, professional development that helps new teachers with contingency planning, awareness of violence/attack, and psychosocial emotional learning challenges is paramount but is often missing from in-service training and support (Auduc, 1998). According to the INEE (2011), in-service professional development is especially important in emergency settings in which education systems, curricular content, and education policy are rapidly evolving to meet changing needs and where a lack of teaching capacity can amplify inequitable access, corruption, and fragmented community structure. Sesnan et al.'s (2013) research found that providing in-service

training and support to refugee teachers helped to expand their professional options and increased the quality of education service delivery in general.

5. Incentives

At present, literature on the links among incentives and motivation, teacher effectiveness, and retention in refugee and emergency settings is scarce (Bennell, 2004; GCE, 2006; INEE, 2009). The GCE (2006) discusses the challenge of setting compensation scales for teachers that differ within and between countries, especially when these are established without analysis of the labour market and specific competing occupations available in that market. Bennell (2004) asserts that it is only possible to realise "higher-order" needs (which are the basis of true job satisfaction) when basic needs have been met. Research undertaken by VSO in eight low-income and conflict-affected countries shows that teacher salaries and other incentives are either "woefully inadequate" or are paid late, paid partially, or not paid at all because of malfunctioning payment systems, while other non-salary benefits—such as subsidised accommodation, travel, and health insurance—are inadequate or poorly administered (GCE, 2006).

In refugee settings specifically, the institutional environment and incentive structures (working for little or no pay or for in-kind benefits rather than cash) often work against the retention of refugee teachers, who, instead, seek better paid work outside of the profession (Sesnan et al., 2013). The INEE (2009) found that teachers who work in emergency settings often receive very little or no compensation for extended periods. At the individual level, teachers must satisfy their basic needs and will move to wherever they can find employment and earn a salary, and the promise of higher or more stable salaries can override a teacher's vocational motivations. At the societal level, refugees may find themselves in situations where there are already many unemployed teachers or insufficient resources to hire teachers despite high pupil-teacher ratios (Sesnan et al., 2013). Sesnan (2012) argues that humanitarian and development workers do not recognise that refugee teachers have the same motivations as other teachers: "Refugees, like anyone else, are rationally motivated by the availability of income" (p. 88). In many cases, communities must supplement with incentives (monetary and nonmonetary) in order to keep teachers teaching (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Although the evidence is mixed, some researchers have found that nonmonetary compensation helps reduce teacher turnover. For example, Ariko and Othuon (2012) found that, in Suba District, Kenya, improved transportation and communication links, improved housing facilities, and the provision of electricity in schools successfully minimized teacher transfer requests.

6. Management structures

Supporting teachers through effective management is critical for retention. Dysfunctional systems and structures can decrease teachers' sense of professional responsibility and commitment (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; VSO, 2002). In refugee and emergency contexts, the challenge is to identify "who is in charge" of managing teachers and how to create a management structure that clarifies expectations and applies consistent standards (Davies & Gunawardena, 1992; Göttelmann-Duret, 2000; Sommers, 2004). This structure must also address grievances among teachers or risk demotivation among the teaching staff (Bennell, 2004).

There are few examples of effective alignment between refugee and emergency education systems and national education systems (Williams, 2006). Indeed, the lack of an "education centre" and effective coordination among multiple agencies engaged in education is mired in funding constraints, donor-driven agendas, and the need for short-term, swift responses (Sommers, 2004). Establishing management structures that would positively impact teacher retention in refugee and emergency settings is a particular challenge because the refugee schools operate outside of a pre-existing education system in the host country. Indeed, the focal point for education leadership in an emergency context may not even be the existing ministry of education (Sommers, 2004). Refugee schools (and teachers) are often managed by multiple agencies with different donor-driven mandates (Sommers, 2004). Sesnan et al. (2013) maintain that the "lack of coordination between ministries that register and manage refugees and ministries and related bodies that manage teachers" is partly responsible for the problems refugee teachers face when searching for jobs in host countries and that this same lack of coordination also makes it more difficult for refugee teachers to understand their rights (p. 6). In addition, the lack of effective collaboration among the relevant ministries (education, foreign affairs, etc.) and inconsistent application of rules and requirements for refugee teachers within receiving countries results in a haphazard approach to providing structural alignment of processes and systems, and to building permanent support (Sinclair, 2001; Sommers, 2004).

Another unique management challenge in refugee settings is determining who will teach and what exams must be taken in order to teach. In Chad, for example,

> The refugees tend to declare that host country teachers, however qualified they may be, do not know how to teach them. The host country in return refuses access to their exams unless trained teachers have taught the children. The NGOs stick to a policy of "letting the refugees choose their teachers," even when they are patently not qualified to do so. (Penson et al., 2011, p. 21)

7. Status and social recognition

Status and social recognition are critical factors that can either promote or compromise teacher retention in all settings. The professional status of teachers and the recognition and support they receive from the local community are critical motivating factors for teachers; therefore, these factors have the potential to greatly influence teacher retention. The World Bank found this to be especially true in emergency settings: "Teachers will be interested in the profession and will develop greater resilience in difficult contexts if their role is recognised and valued" (2010, p. 23).

There are two key issues regarding the status and social recognition of teachers: the policies that affect the teachers, and the attitudes and behaviours exhibited toward those teachers. Policies that make it difficult for teachers to understand the terms of their employment—or the outright absence of specific terms of employment—can be frustrating (Duthilleul, 2004). Sesnan et al. (2013) emphasise that a teacher's refugee status "works against economic security, tenure, contractual protections, promotion prospects, and professional development" (p. 3).

The second issue—attitudes and behaviours toward teachers—correlates directly with teacher motivation and satisfaction. As Nieto (2003) points out, negative attitudes toward teachers and a lack of respect for the profession compromise retention: "It is only when

teachers are treated as professionals and intellectuals . . . that they will be enticed to remain in the profession, and that new teachers will be attracted to join" (p. 396). This is true globally, but the need for positive attitudes and behaviours toward teachers is all the more pronounced in refugee settings, where traditional support structures are lacking. Moreover, social recognition and community support for teachers can prove especially challenging for teachers in rural areas. Sargent and Hannum (2005) found that teachers in rural areas frequently feel isolated from the local community, particularly if they come from outside the village or if their level of education differentiates them from the rest of the community.

Finally, the employment of contract teachers is also an important issue, particularly as contract teachers can be seen as a "threat" to national teachers when there is a teacher shortage. The literature is somewhat divided on the effectiveness of hiring contract teachers, with some arguing that it creates arbitrary divisions, which in turn leads to teacher dissatisfaction (Govinda & Josephine, 2004), while others contend that contract teachers are a valuable resource for education systems suffering from teacher shortages, such as in Cambodia (Geeves & Bredenberg, 2005). On a related note, Bennell (2004) maintains that the practice of "emergency credentialing" teachers compounds this lack of trust, respect, and accountability and, ultimately, negatively impacts the status of teachers. This notion is reinforced in a World Bank (2010) report, which found that strategies used to address teacher shortages in fragile settings (such as the introduction of contract teachers or the acceleration of pre-service or preparatory training) often threaten the occupational status of teachers in these settings. GCE (2006), for example, recognises that *short-term measures* may be needed as a stopgap in emergency settings but advocates that these should not become *long-term solutions.* Further, teachers still should be required to meet the established criteria for quality.

CONCLUSION

Teachers are vitally important to educational quality. In refugee and emergency settings, it is critical that more research focuses on teacher retention, as it is a key component of achieving equitable access to a quality education. The seven components explored in this literature review are certainly not the only determinants of teacher retention, but they do provide a helpful framework in which to examine the extremely complex challenges associated with the motivation, satisfaction, and retention of teachers. The compounding factors present in refugee and emergency settings create a unique lens through which to view the issue of teacher retention.

The research on teacher retention is fragmented and diverse, as the INEE has emphasised:

> Issues related to teachers [are] under-researched. Specifically, informants called for more studies into teacher development and training, teacher competencies, teacher retention, teaching for psychosocial wellbeing, the benefits of teacher training/capacity building, the morale and compensation of teachers, teacher certification in difficult environments, teacher management in emergencies, and the identity of teachers. (as cited in Penson, et al., 2011, p. 2)

As donors focus on equitable access for students, research on the factors affecting teachers (how quality teachers are attracted, how they are prepared and supported to

teach, and how quality teachers are retained) needs to be prioritised in education strategies.

The collection and analysis of data on teacher retention (especially in refugee and emergency settings) is essential to an enhanced understanding of the issue. To this end, Ochs and Jackson maintain: "Emphasis should be placed on strengthening existing data management systems and monitoring data and information at national, regional and international levels to address issues relating to tracking teacher turnover, recruitment, deployment, and relevant information about each foreign recruited teacher" (as cited in Penson, et al., 2011, p. 24).

Many of the retention-related issues touched upon in this literature review have significantly different implications for refugee teachers teaching in a host country than they do for national teachers teaching refugee populations. Both groups are, indeed, "refugee teachers"— in that they are teaching refugee populations—but the two have vastly different experiences with critical issues such as certification and incentives. This important distinction is overlooked in most of the existing literature, which means that we have a limited understanding of the motivational consequences of incentives, certification, access to professional development, and status on either national or refugee teachers. In addition, national policy, the right to work, and access issues will inevitably be different for each group.

Furthermore, there is a notable absence of literature on female refugee teachers specifically. The literature that does exist tends to focus on the low number of female teachers in refugee and emergency settings, with some limited suggestions as to why this may be the case. For example, in the Dadaab refugee camp—a predominantly Muslim community—teaching is not typically viewed as an appropriate profession for females (Gomez, 2013). In addition, Stacki (2012) emphasises the need for a gender-sensitive approach to professional development because, at present, such inequalities are not acknowledged in pre-service and in-service training programmes that may increase female teacher retention. While Bennell and Akyeampong's (2007) study of teacher motivation in Africa and Asia included quantitative and qualitative research on the differences between male and female teachers, why women choose to become (or not to become) teachers, differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for male and female teachers, and differing trends in teacher retention across the two genders have not been examined with any rigor in refugee or emergency contexts.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this literature review we identified a number of critical issues that merit further research, including

- How refugee and emergency settings uniquely influence women and their decisions to teach (or not to teach) and to remain in the profession
- Working conditions in urban, rural, refugee settlement, and camp contexts and their impact on teacher retention
- The potential benefits or consequences (in terms of retention) of recruiting and deploying volunteer, contract, and/or professionally certified teachers in refugee-populated areas

- Differences in motivating factors for primary and secondary school teachers
- Differences in motivating factors for refugee and national teachers
- Models for effective and coordinated community leadership, security, and management structures (in refugee camps and urban settings) to strengthen and support teachers

In terms of future research, the seven areas explored in this literature review provide a useful starting point from which to approach the issues that influence teacher retention. In addition, quantitative data collection on teacher turnover in refugee and emergency contexts would shed important light on the motivational factors that cause teachers to remain in teaching or to leave the profession. Only with a solid evidence base can important changes be made to policy or practice that will enable education systems to retain quality teachers.

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The Views of International Students regarding University Support Services in Australia: A case study

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This paper reports on a study aimed at developing an improved understanding of the support needs of international students. Using a case study approach at one Australian university, a three stage data collection process was adopted: interviews with key support service providers in the university, student focus groups, and a large-scale survey. Emphasis was placed on identifying the issues that are significant to international students in terms of their study experience, the services they consider as valuable and the factors that contribute to take-up. The findings reveal that, while most respondents felt that the range of support services provided is appropriate, current services could be improved by offering a more student-centred service structure and delivery. Issues identified as influencing service use include the institutional culture, perceived importance and awareness of services, the quality of information provided about those services, ease of access, timeliness of service provision and cost.

Keywords: support services; international students; student-centred; case study method

INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education, in which Australia has been an active participant, is a global phenomenon that has been taking place over the last twenty years. For Australia, being successful in this arena has been, and continues to be, of strategic importance at many levels: not only does this sector contribute significantly to the viability of Australia's higher education sector (Bradley, Noonan, & Scales, 2008), it also facilitated the development of political alliances and diplomatic partnerships with key neighbouring countries (Gallagher, 2011; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Roberts & Dunworth, 2012).

The internationalisation agenda has been facilitated through stringent government regulations, which established policy guidelines for the management of all aspects of student visas, education providers, and education agents. The regulations, while facilitating the success of the sector in terms of growth, have not necessarily guaranteed satisfying experiences for international students. Research, worldwide, indicates that the experiences of international students undertaking overseas study experiences are variable.

A number of studies report low levels of student satisfaction even when institutions provide a wide range of resources and support, usually in accordance with legislated requirements (Carr, McKay, & Rugimbana, 1999; Tan & Simpson, 2008; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). Recent Australian research, by Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008), suggests that both the sector and the legislation fails to adequately consider the protection needs of international students from a safety, security and wellbeing context, and this has contributed to concerns about the quality of the student experience and the reputation of Australia as a provider of education.

Providing a range of services will not automatically improve the experience unless the services are provided in a way which ensures they are utilized and effective. Smith (2006, 2007) and Forbes-Mewett (2008) argue that support must be meaningful to be effective and that the provision of support services in a depersonalised, generic manner will mean they are unlikely to address the needs of students. Jou and Fukada (1995) find that those students who perceive they have a greater level of support are better adjusted than those who need support but felt they had not received it. This suggests that how the context and meaning of support is conceptualized, both at an individual and institutional level, impacts on how support is provided and, ultimately, perceived by the users.

A number of views exist about the meaning of support and support provision. These have underlying assumptions which drive the model of how services are delivered. Jacklin and Le Riche (2009) are of the view that confusion exists about how the term "support" is used. In some instances it is seen within a deficit model focused on the problems of the individual, while others view it as about the development of an appropriate culture within the organisation. Bartram (2009) describes the culture of support in the context of a holistic approach in which a nurturing environment is critical to the development of learners. Evidence increasingly suggests a framing of support service provision is needed which differs from that typically provided. In light of the rapid changes in higher education currently occurring, it is critical institutions rework how they operate so they "fit within a student's life" rather than expecting students to "fit within how institutions decide to run their operations" (McInnis, 2004). This essentially means that institutions need to establish support of students as central to delivery, which means that institutions need to be more aware of how students think. According to Clegg, Bradley and Smith (2006), establishing such a mode of delivery requires the exploration of institutional factors as well as the cultures and contexts within which support operates.

This paper describes the findings of a survey, which was administered to international students at an Australian university. The survey was the final stage of an in-depth case study that also involved interviews and focus groups with staff and students. The analysis of the qualitative data from the initial stages, described in Roberts and Dunworth (2012), enabled the identification of key factors, which then facilitated the identification of themes and underpinned the development of the survey instrument used for the research discussed in this paper. The survey focused on understanding the support needs of international students, the services they consider as valuable and the factors (institutional, cultural and contextual) that contribute to the degree to which those services are taken up. The overall case study approach was selected as the most appropriate methodology since the design and delivery of support and support services for international students is complex, contextual and institutionally specific.

THE STUDY

The site for the research was an Australian university with a long history of enrolling large numbers of international students onshore, particularly from South-East Asia. At the time of the study, there were approximately 10,700 international students on the main campus engaged in fulltime study through accredited courses, study abroad or student exchange programs. Of the total fee revenue of the university, international students enrolled onshore contributed 21–24 per cent from 2007 to 2010, which was comparable to the university's income from the Commonwealth Government of 21 per cent (Curtin University, 2010). To assist this large body of students, the university provides a wide range of support services.

The three key research objectives for this study are:

1. Identify what international students perceive as the main issues they face studying in an overseas educational institution, and their relationship to the range and appropriateness of services provided;
2. Identify what factors enhance or inhibit the use of support services; and
3. Recommend strategies to improve the delivery of support services to international students.

The overarching case study research approach incorporated a mixed method inductive sequential triangulation process to examine the phenomena of support service delivery from the perspective of international students. Using this approach meant the data from each stage of the research was able to inform subsequent stages and validate the findings. Qualitative methodologies used in the first two stages, namely interviews and focus groups, were used to underpin the development of the essentially quantitative research method of the third stage.

The case study method is a comprehensive research strategy encompassing three key elements: design logic, multiple data collection strategies, and specific analysis approaches (Yin, 2003). As an approach, it provides "contextual understanding and meaningfulness" (Greene, 2006, p. 94) to the human experience and the circumstances associated with that experience; in this case through the examination of reported experiences of international students of support services, and the organisational and managerial context and processes which impact that experience.

Analysis of the interviews and focus groups yielded congruent data which established internal consistency. Four overarching themes about support services were identified: awareness, usefulness and use, access and barriers to use. These themes, as well as a number of sub-themes that emerged from staff interviews and student focus groups are described in more detail below. Both students and staff agreed, in a general sense, that:

- Information dissemination and promotion of services would be more effective if they coincided with the time of students' greatest need;
- A more student-centred approach to service delivery was required;
- International students faced specific difficulties integrating into their new environment from cognitive, emotional and systemic perspective; and
- As positive staff/student culture was important, with students raising this as an issue in terms of their experience of support and support service provision.

There were some disparities in views between staff and students. These related to opinions about who is responsible for issues with the services provided, with staff tending to attribute responsibility to the central university management, the information managers and, to a lesser extent, the teaching faculties. Students, however, attributed their negative views about support services directly to the providers of the service delivered; they clearly distinguished between those services which they perceived as being of greater and lesser value. Thus, students were focused on the service delivery whereas staff focused more on the service setting and any constraints within which they perceived they operated. What was evident from the analysis of the data from the first two stages of the research, and similarly found by Bartram (2009), was the importance of a positive organisational culture, which has the needs of international students as central to the provision of support and support services.

For the final stage of the research, themes and sub-themes, which had emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data, were used to identify key concepts seen as critical to the development of an environment which supported students and could be explored in a questionnaire. The concepts included: awareness, utilisation, usefulness, accessibility, importance of service, and barriers to usage. The developed questionnaire comprised ten questions, and commenced with an open-ended question asking respondents to indicate what they thought were the main issues facing international students studying in the educational institution. This set the scene and enabled participants to express their views and thoughts without any prompting. Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of available services and to rate the usefulness of each of the 24 services offered by the university. For the services students indicated they had not used, a subset of questions asked them to select a reason for non-use from a list of options. The option of "other" was also provided. Later questions sought information about the source of students' knowledge of support services, asked respondents to identify the five most important services, and invited additional comments about information students had received prior to arrival, how support services could be improved and respondents' overall opinion of services. The final series of questions sought demographic information, such as age, sex, enrolment and country of birth.

Piloting of the questionnaire was undertaken in two phases. In the first phase, a convenience sample of 13 international students was asked to complete the questionnaire and to provide feedback on content, layout and language. In phase two, the questionnaire was developed as an online survey tool using a commercially available product, QuestionPro, as the delivery platform. The format was made as easy to use as possible. Modifications were made to the hardcopy layout to accommodate the online format and feedback from the hard copy pilot. In this stage, a convenience sample of 10 international students was sent an email, requesting their involvement in the pilot of the online questionnaire. The email explained the purpose of the research and the online questionnaire, including the feedback section at the end. Students were advised that involvement was voluntary, and that confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Seven of the students completed the online survey and, as a result of their feedback, changes were made to the survey layout, instructions and questions. This process was intended to address the issue of content validity; once this had been satisfactorily established, a test-retest exercise was undertaken to explore reliability. This involved administering the questionnaire to a single group of students at two different times, two weeks apart. A group of 15 international students were involved and non-agreement in responses between the first and second survey completion were counted when the 'degree

of usefulness' (very useful, some use and not useful) differed between the first test response and the second. Based on this, an overall agreement level of 89 per cent was achieved. This high figure confirmed that the questionnaire was sufficiently reliable and could be used with confidence.

The parameters set for the survey were that students should be enrolled and attending their course, studying internally on a full time basis, and have completed at least one semester of study. Fulltime and internal enrolment are a visa requirement for international students studying in Australia. A minimum of one semester of study would ensure potential respondents would have had opportunity to experience life as an international student, gain an awareness of the issues, have had exposure to support services provided and, possibly, have needed and utilised some available services. Students enrolled in their first semester of study were not included given they would have been enrolled for only six weeks at the time of the survey, with limited exposure or reason to use the range of support services available. Similarly, study abroad and student exchange students were excluded due to the short time frame—often less than six months—associated with their experience.

The total number of students enrolled who met the above selection criteria was 3,105 and all these students were invited to participate. At the request of the educational institution, the survey was conducted in two cohorts. A total of 1,778 students were randomly selected for the initial cohort, with the remaining 1,327 the second cohort. Table 1 details the student numbers in each cohort by faculty.

Table 1. Total International Student Numbers in each Cohort by Faculty

Academic discipline/area of enrolment	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Total number of international students
Business	956	708	1,664
Humanities	209	148	357
Health Sciences	262	172	434
Science and Engineering	351	299	650
Total	1,778	1,327	3,105

Data from the questionnaire were analysed using two different analytical packages. For the quantitative questions, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used and for the open-ended questions SPSS Text Analysis for Surveys (STAfS): SPSS analysis provided descriptive statistics; and STAfS identified theme categories from responses to the open-ended questions and comments, and groups responses with similar meanings into these categories. Responses in each of the categories were counted and linkage patterns with other categories identified. Developing a matrix or linkage pattern allowed the detection of patterns of association (Bazeley, 2009) and, hence, a deeper understanding of the phenomena of support services provision, utilisation and importance from an international student perspective.

Four key themes emerged from the data related to support services, which are conceptually linked, as illustrated in Figure 1.

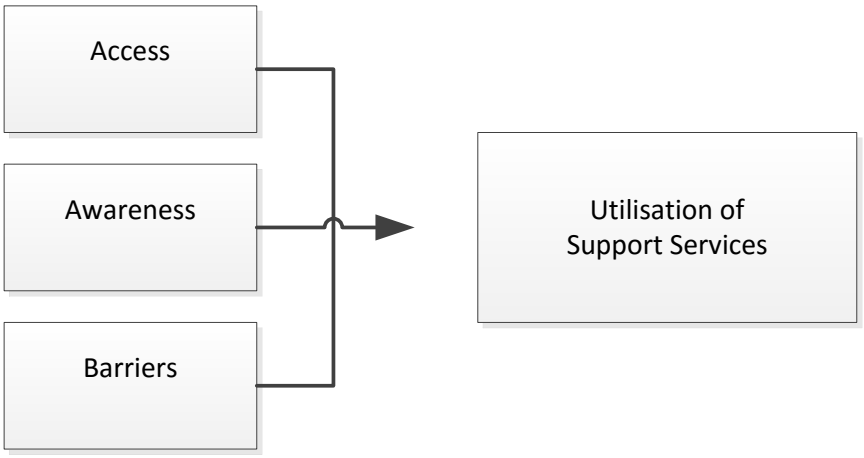

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The data from the second part of the study, thus, led to a refinement and distillation of the key concepts, which had emerged from the first part of the study, into three overarching concepts and helped to explain the use or non-use of any given support service. In this model "access" refers to knowledge of how to go about using a particular service, as well as having that service available at a time and in a location that suited students' perceived needs. "Awareness" is an issue where the results from the online survey were rather different from those identified by the focus groups—as described below. The theme "barriers" to use overlapped, to some extent, with the other two themes but included other factors. Aspects of this conceptual framework are further expanded through the framework used to analyse the data, as illustrated in Figure 2.

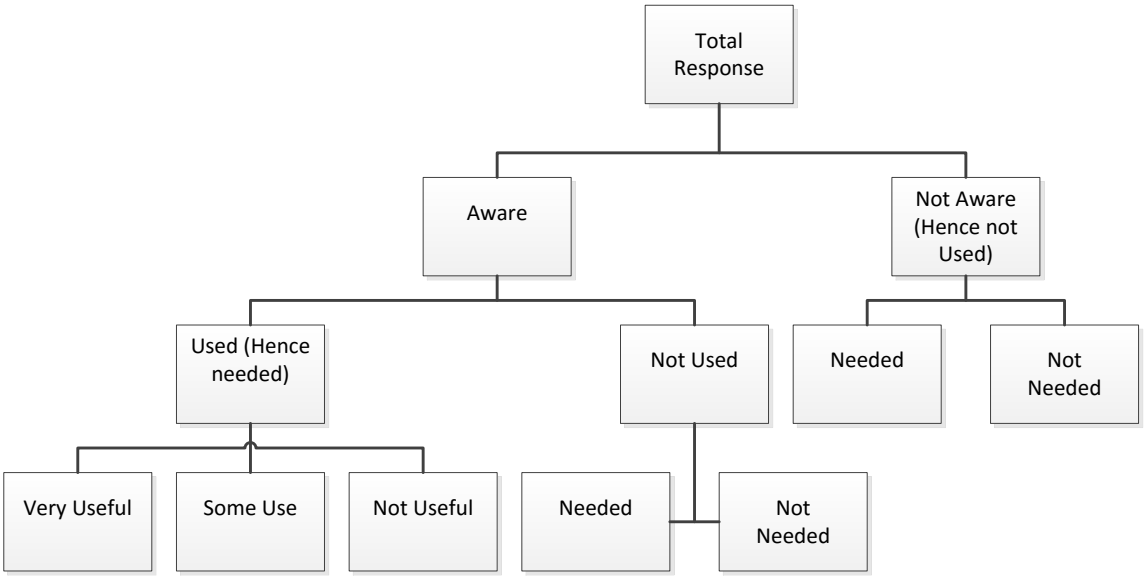

Figure 2. Framework used to Analyse Survey Data

RESULTS

The survey was at least partially completed by 395 students but 62 surveys were not included in the analysis because they did not include responses to the majority of questions. This left 333 usable questionnaires for analysis. Not all students answered every question and some questions could be given more than one answer, so the totals for any given question do not necessarily add up to 100 per cent. This is particularly the case with demographic data, which was requested at the end of the survey and was left blank by 23 percent of the total number of respondents.

Among the four academic faculties, the largest number of respondents who stated their faculty came from Business (n=101, 40%). Other respondents were from Health Sciences (n=53, 21%), Humanities (n=36, 14%) and Science and Engineering (n=65, 25%). Since the concern for this study was that a sufficiently large number of responses should be received to allow for general observations about the student population, the percentage of responses was of less importance than the actual number.

The majority of students who responded (78%) were in the age group 20-29 years and 71 percent were undergraduates.

The majority of respondents to the survey (81%) were self-funding students who relied on private means for their tuition fees. The remainder were funded through sponsor sources, such as their home government, aid agencies or through scholarship systems. Most respondents had commenced their study after 2004, with the greatest number having started in 2007. The majority, 203 (89%), had more than one year of exposure and potential opportunity to use support services provided by the education institution.

The respondents originated from a wide range of countries, 46 in total. The majority were from South-East Asian countries, which is consistent with the international student enrolment pattern for the university. Although English was cited as the most frequently spoken language (n=85, 34%), the majority of these responses were received from multiple language-speaking households. A form of Chinese was spoken as the most dominant language (n=59, 24%) of homes followed by Indonesian (n=27, 11%). Across the remaining respondents, as many as 29 different languages were spoken.

Theme results

Awareness, use and non-use of support services

The majority of students indicated a high level of awareness of the 24 support services offered, with more than 85 percent of respondents being aware of the first 12 services listed in Table 2. This finding from the online survey differed from the results from the earlier focus group phase of the study, where lack of awareness of services had been a key issue. The differences in the findings may be explained by the mode of data collection. In the focus groups, students were initially asked about support services and subsequently provided with a list of available support services while, in the online survey, all support services were identified prior to respondents being asked about their use of each service.

Only four of the services were used by 85 percent of the students who responded. A degree of "unmet need" was expressed, with the "Buddy System" identified as needed by 30 per cent of respondents. This was followed by "Sporting and Fitness Facilities",

"Mentoring Support" and "Sporting Clubs", each at 25 percent. Clearly, there has to be a relationship between student need, awareness and use, since students will not use services if they are unaware that they are available or it is a service they believe they do not need. For example although the "Disability" services were used by 30 percent of respondents, only 2 percent indicated they were aware of the service and needed it but did not use it; that is, the implication is that the students who needed the service were aware of the service and used it as required. What is of concern with regard to the findings reported in Table 2 is that respondents agreed that certain services were required, they were aware that the services existed, but did not use the services, thus suggesting there may be barriers to the use of the services.

Table 2. Use and non-use of support services

Service	% Used service	% Aware of service but not used	
		Needed	Not Needed
Library Service	100	0	0
Bookshop	98	0	2
International Office	95	1	4
Campus Security	89	2	9
Student Advisors Student Central	79	6	15
Student Guild	78	6	16
Careers Service	78	10	12
Health Service	77	7	16
Student Advisors International Office	70	7	23
Residential Assistance	68	5	27
International Student Societies	66	16	18
Volunteers	64	9	27
The Learning Centre	62	16	22
First Year Experience Coordinator	58	19	23
Student Equity	48	11	41
Sporting and Fitness Facilities	48	25	27
Mentoring Support	42	25	33
Sporting Clubs	41	25	34
Counselling Service	40	15	45
English Language Support	40	14	46
Buddy System	34	30	36
Disability	30	2	68
Alumni	29	21	50
Multi Faith Officer	28	10	62

Usefulness

The 11 most useful services identified by the students are listed in the Table 3. By far the most used and useful service mentioned was the "Library" (78% "very useful").

Table 3. Usefulness of support services

Service	% Very useful	% Some use	% Not useful	N = Total number used service
Library Services	78	20	2	311
Bookshop	41	53	6	293
International Office	38	54	8	282
Campus Security	33	46	21	255
Student Guild	21	60	19	242
Health Service	42	48	10	248
Careers Service	25	59	16	220
Residential Assistance	40	45	15	220
Student Advisors Student Central	36	54	10	210
Student Advisors International Office	34	52	14	187
International Student Societies	22	57	21	171

It is unsurprising that respondents had a high level of awareness about the library, and that it was rated as being important, given the role that books and publications play in academic development, but the high level of agreement that its services are useful attests to the quality of this service. In contrast, the campus "Security Service", which had a high level of awareness, and was considered important (as shown in Table 4 below), was not rated highly in terms of usefulness, and 10 percent of respondents, in a later question, further identified the security service as an area where improvements were needed. Similarly, awareness of the University's international office and its services was high and the services were considered important. However, 62 percent of respondents rated their services as only of "some use" or "not useful" suggesting the need for improvement.

Importance of support services

The five most important services mentioned by students, on a frequency of mention as "most important", are identified in Table 4. The "Library" was most often mentioned followed by "Campus Security".

Table 4. Support Services Rated as Important

Service	How often mentioned as most important N (%)	How often mentioned as amongst five most important N (%)
Library	54(16)	153(46)
Campus Security	42(13)	103(31)
International Office	24(7)	93(28)
Health Service	22(7)	101(30)
The Learning Centre	14(4)	51(15)

The importance of these services can be seen as linked to the main issues that were identified by students in their open-ended comments, and described in Table 5. For

example, "Campus Security" was rated as an important service, perhaps because the respondents were concerned about security and safety on campus, and were worried about discrimination and racism. Similarly, the "Learning Centre" may have been identified as an important service because of respondents' concern about language and communication as well as integration into the academic environment.

Barriers to use

Respondents who had indicated they were aware of a particular support service but had not used it were asked to identify reasons for non-use. Other than "not needing to use the service", the most common reasons given were "did not know how to access the service" and "couldn't find any information about the service when I needed it". Comments provided by students under the section "Other" provided a range of additional reasons for the services not being used, with the most frequently suggested reasons being "time associated with using services" and "cost". This may be particularly relevant for those services, such as the "Buddy System", "Sporting Facilities", "Mentoring Support" and "Sporting Clubs", where respondents identified a high level of unmet need (as shown in Table 2).

Feedback on main issues

Seven open-ended questions explored, in greater depth, issues to do with support service delivery and utilisation. Of the 333 respondents, 287 (86%) made comments. The first question (at the beginning of the questionnaire) asked respondents to indicate the main issues they faced as an international student enrolled at the university. Language and communication were the most frequently mentioned (24%) with many respondents identifying multiple issues (Table 5). There were relatively strong links between issues related to "language and communication" and "integration into academic environment" and "culture".

Table 5. Main issues faced by international students

Main issues faced by international students	Nos of responses	% Responses
Language and communication	166	24
Integration into academic environment	118	17
Culture	109	16
Social isolation	80	12
Financial	59	9
Access to services	54	8
Security and safety	35	5
Accommodation	32	5
Discrimination and racism	28	4
Total	681	100

Comments below describe the type of open-ended responses received from respondents in relation to the main issues international students perceive they face as students:

> Cultural differences and English, being a second language for most international students (some prefer to be quiet, avoid interaction with others to prevent making grammar mistakes).

> Language barrier and cultural shock. I think that is main issue for us being as international students to communicate with Australians. Some of us never talked in foreign language before and I think it really affects our confidence in socializing.

> Culture shock, lack of social support, financial difficulty, home sickness, finding jobs especially when companies advertise for positions and then inform you upon submitting applications that only Australians are considered . . . racism.

Suggested improvements

The first of the final six questions, located at the end of the questionnaire, asked students: *If support services were to be improved at [the institution] what would you suggest?* Although 154 (46%) respondents to the survey made no comment and, of those who did respond, 16 (7%) indicated they were satisfied, 179 respondents suggested a number of strategies for improving the quality and delivery of the current services. Improvement in the quality of services (30%) was the most frequently mentioned, with safety and security specifically being identified by 15 percent of respondents. International students in the first open-ended question also identified safety and security as issues. Better promotion of (21%) and access to services (17%) were also mentioned by respondents as ways to improve the services currently being offered.

Table 6. Suggested Improvements to Support Services

Suggestions for improvements	Nos of responses	% Responses
Improve quality of services	71	30
Better promotion of services	49	21
Better access to services	40	17
Improve safety and security	34	15
Improve staff capacity to help	23	10
Satisfied	16	7
Total	233	100

Comments below describe the type of open-ended responses received from respondents in relation to suggested improvements in support service:

> The provision of service is only as good as its consistent quality.

> I have noticed that there are so many services provided but I was not aware of them. Therefore, its difficult for me to decide as I don't know what each support service does.

> They should allow people at the international office to be well equipped to know how to advise students during orientation and not send them to and from one office only to be sent back to the international office. Have mentors for students such that they can give them support.

> Support service centres should understand that students are not batons/balls. Don't just pass them onto each individual department where the student's query is not of their concern. It is very frustrating to have to move back and forth different buildings to solve different issues.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Little prior Australian research has investigated, in detail, the full range of support service provision in one university using a "whole of service approach"; taking into consideration the culture of support service provision within the institution, the legislative requirements of support service for international students, and the views of those who provide support services and those who use the services. Understanding the culture of the institution in which the services are provided has enabled a thorough examination of the potential impact the setting could have with regard to students' experiences and perceptions of the services provided.

Main issues faced and range of services

In terms of the first research objective, identifying the major issues students consider they face, five major factors were identified:

1. Language and communication
2. Integration into academic life
3. Cultural adjustment
4. Social isolation and
5. Security and wellbeing

Strong links were identified between language and associated communication skills and integration into academic life, indicating the level of importance these issues hold for international students. They were also found to relate to social and cultural adjustment and an individual's sense of security and wellbeing, a finding consistent with previous research (Brown, 2008; Burns, 1991; Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2005; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Rochecouste, Oliver, Mulligan, & Davies, 2010; Rosenthal, Russell, &Thomson, 2007; Sawir, 2005; Wang, 2004). In relation to the range of services provided, respondents were of the view that existing services provided by the university were appropriate and for the most part sufficiently diverse to meet the majority of students' needs based on the issues they indicated they faced.

The findings do, however, indicate underutilisation of many services (Table 2) even though students were aware they existed, with many services being rated only of "some use" or "not useful" (Table 3). The overwhelming number of comments strongly supported an urgent need to review and improve the way in which services are organised and delivered. The disparity between the views of service providers and students identified in stages one and two, and the findings of the final survey suggests the underlying context of service delivery may well be impacting the use and usefulness of services. In essence, services may well be more reflective of the position of central management rather than the felt needs of students. Smith (2006, 2007) and Forbes-Mewett (2008) suggests this has the potential to render the services as depersonalised and generic, as one would expect.

Factors enhancing or inhibiting use

With regard to the second research objective, the factors that enhanced or inhibited the use of support services from the perspective of respondents related either to environmental factors or to the way services were delivered. Enhancing factors included the range of services available, level of awareness and perceived importance of the service and whether services were offered in a student-centred manner. Factors which inhibited the use of support services were: their perceived limited usefulness as currently provided; the perceived level of assistance given by service providers; the underlying culture and context in which services were offered; and deficiencies in the quality of available information, including the promotion of services, problems with accessibility of services, and timing issues associated with the use of the service.

Developing a supportive learning culture within the university will require those factors which are identified as positively influencing the use of services, such as those provided by the Library, to be considered as the benchmark standard in any review of services. While there is little evidence to suggest new services are needed, there is evidence which supports the view that services, with the exception of the Library, are not provided in a way that is optimal for the students.

Strategies to improve the delivery of support services

The final research objective specifically focussed on the identification of strategies to improve the delivery of support services to international students. As previously discussed, Bartram (2009), Forbes-Mewett (2008), Jacklin and Le Riche (2009) and Smith (2006, 2007) all argue that, for support to be meaningful, it must be student-centred and in a culture which embraces positive student learning. Kou (2009) goes further, suggesting that, unless the strategic vision and the culture of management interrelates effectively with the staff—academic and administrative—who deliver the educational experience, then quality from a student perspective will not be evidenced in outcomes. Our research findings support the view that the majority of students value the services provided and see them as appropriate, but believe improvements in how the current services are provided are needed to improve the culture and context of support, the use and usefulness of the services provided, and to maximise their impact and effectiveness.

In summary this study has resulted in a greater understanding of the phenomenon of support service delivery for international students. It confirms that the issues which the respondents believe are most important in their experience of overseas study are related to the kinds of services they most value. However, the study also indicates that the valuing of a service in principle, and a belief in the importance of its availability, does not necessarily lead to a view that a given service, as experienced, is useful. The study reveals a disconnect between the importance of a support service and the way in which it is delivered. A key recommendation to flow from this research, therefore, supported by the participants' own suggestions of ways of improving services, is that a model of service delivery needs to be developed that is more centred on students' needs.

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Improving outcomes for refugee children: A case study on the impact of Montessori education along the Thai-Burma border

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There are 25 million displaced children worldwide, and those receiving schooling are often educated in overcrowded classrooms. Montessori is a child-centred educational method that provides an alternative model to traditional educational approaches. In this model, students are able to direct their own learning and develop at their own pace, working with materials rather than in supervised groups or with direct teacher instruction. Because most children are working alone, teachers have more time to work one-on-one with children even when student-teacher ratios are quite large. This gives teachers increased opportunity to tailor their teaching to the specific needs and strengths of each student. We conducted an evaluation of Montessori classroom conversion for displaced students on the Thai-Myanmar border. We administered the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to 66 children before and after classroom conversion and across treatment and control classroom conditions. We then conducted difference in difference testing. All domains showed meaningful improvements in ASQ scores, with the Montessori students gaining 18 points relative to the traditional students ($p = 0.33$). However, only the personal-social domain of the ASQ was statistically significant (8.8 point gain for the Montessori students relative to the control, $p < 0.05$) in our underpowered sample.

Keywords: Montessori; child-centred education; refugees; ASQ; pedagogy; child development; displaced children; Burma; Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Over half of the 50 million displaced people around the world are children (UNICEF, 2014). Displacement presents significant challenges for young people as they struggle with insecurity, instability and psychological trauma. Some believe that education can mitigate these traumas to some extent by providing "a vehicle for rebuilding refugee children's lives, through social interaction and gaining knowledge and skills for their future lives" (Crisp, Talbot, & Chipollone, 2001, p. vii). However, this objective can only

be met if it meets both the developmental needs of students, and fosters student learning and achievement.

For refugee children, such measures of educational quality are lacking. Too often, the student teacher ratios in refugee classrooms are very large, the teachers are overwhelmed and undertrained, and the students sometimes come from homes with illiterate parents (Muennig, Boulmier-Darden, Khouzam, Zhu, & Hancock, 2014; Verma, Chan, & Muennig, 2011). Moreover, the students are sometimes under a good deal of psychological stress, thereby limiting their opportunities for meaningful play or interaction time (Boothby 1994; Verma, Lee, Su, Chan, & Muennig, 2010). Relative to their Thai peers, they also face a large number of barriers to school success, ranging from toxic exposures, low parental literacy, and forced separation of the community and family units (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Lang, 2002; Martin, 2004; Martin, 2005; Pernice, 1996; Su & Muennig, 2005). Thai students, conversely, tend to come from intact families, have access to classrooms with lower student-teacher ratios, and have access to adequate nutrition and universal healthcare (Su & Muennig, 2005). In Thailand, schools tend to teach in Central Thai (the dominant language used in media in Thailand) and, in most public schools, no provisions are made for bilingual or cross-cultural education (Su & Muennig, 2005).

One solution to these persistent problems in refugee learning environments is Montessori education. Montessori classrooms, on average, produce superior cognitive outcomes relative to traditional learning environments in which the teacher is in front of a classroom and delivers content (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). Traditional classrooms sometimes provide fewer opportunities for critical or creative thinking or meaningful student-teacher interaction, particularly when the classroom is crowded and students face language barriers (Su & Muennig, 2005). The core components of Montessori include educating the "whole child", promoting student choice and independence, positioning the teacher as a facilitator and individualizing instruction (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006; Montessori, 2013). Montessori is one of various educational approaches that is possibly positioned to offer great advantages in a setting in which the student-teacher ratios are large, linguistic abilities vary, students' emotional and mental health is at greater risk, and parental educational attainment is inconsistent. The Montessori method is possibly also better able to respond to the emotional, social and developmental needs of refugee children because teacher time is freed up to provide more attention to students in need. As some students do independent work and build on their innate curiosity, Montessori educators can focus on other individual students to better nurture them academically and emotionally. Other options for doing so also exist (e.g., the flipped classroom), but this paper focuses on the Montessori approach as implemented in one city in Thailand (Muennig et al., 2014).

In general, there is a need for more research regarding successful educational methods and pedagogy for this disenfranchised population because the existing research does not adequately provide educational planners with the resources or information to develop effective programs (Williams, 2001). We examine the impact of the Montessori method on refugee children's social, cognitive and motor development using a difference-in-difference approach. We hypothesize that child-centred learning, specifically the Montessori method, is a more effective way of fostering child development and promoting academic achievement in refugee children than traditional schooling for two reasons. First, it allows students to learn independently in the context of very large student-to-teacher ratios. Second, it allows students to engage in a wide array of learning

activities that are largely language independent. For instance, math skills are built by working with materials rather than via verbal instruction.

METHODS

Participants

The Khom Loy Development Foundation (a non-government organization based in Thailand) collected extensive data on a sample of displaced children and their parents from two schools in Mae Sot for internal evaluation purposes. The refugee community in Mae Sot is largely in flux. Some migrants express their desire to live in Thailand permanently whereas others moved to Thailand specifically to send their children to school and, thus, lack the same sense of permanence.

The families in the study represent a convenience sample of non-Thai children aged 3 to 6 in two classrooms within these two schools. One classroom had been converted to Montessori and the other had not. Both classrooms had 60 students with one teacher and one assistant teacher. The "local" classroom was taught in the traditional Thai style, with an emphasis on teacher-driven instruction and repetition. The Montessori classroom focused on child-directed learning and use of specifically designed Montessori materials. All instruction was conducted in Thai. Children who were not native speakers were taught Thai in the classroom, but no other provisions were made. The students generally came from families with very low educational attainment. The students themselves had less than 1-2 years of schooling, on average. The family variables detailed in the chart below illustrate that the participating families from both classrooms have comparable backgrounds; thus, the impact social, economic and cultural factors may have had on the children's ASQ scores was controlled allowing the researchers to analyse the impact of the educational method used in the classrooms.

The study was found to be exempt from Institutional Review Board review by the Columbia University Institutional Review Board.

The descriptive information on the sample is presented in Table 1. In all, 122 participants (66 children and 56 parents) were interviewed. Data on other household members were collected by proxy (an interview of the primary adult caregiver). Table 1 provides detailed information separated by school.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	School		
	Montessori	**Local**	**Total**
Family variables			
N	29	27	56
Mean(SD)			
Number of Siblings	2.61(1.31)	2.88(1.61)	2.74(1.46)
Number of Rooms	1.31(0.62)	1.63(0.84)	1.47(0.75)
Number of People Sleeping in each Rooms	4.04(1.50)	3.63(1.33)	3.84(1.42)
Monthly Income (THB)	7874(12794)	8576(8760)	8212(10940)
Annual Income (THB)	67852(38480)	99312(106441)	82977(79614)

	School		
	Montessori	**Local**	**Total**
***Count* (%)**			
Marital Status			
Divorced	4(14.81)	1(3.85)	5(9.43)
Married	21(77.78)	25(96.15)	46(86.79)
Separated	2(7.41)	0(0.00)	2(3.77)
Owned Refrigerator	9(32.14)	11(45.83)	20(38.46)
Seen Soldiers	26(92.86)	20(76.92)	46(85.19)
Witnessed Gunfire	15(53.37)	9(33.33)	24(43.64)
Approached by Soldier	6(21.43)	4(14.81)	10(18.18)
Witnessed Death	8(28.57)	13(48.15)	21(38.18)
Harmed by Solider	8(29.63)	3(11.11)	11(20.37)
Religion			
Buddhism	27(96.43)	23(85.19)	50(90.91)
Christian	1(3.57)	2(7.41)	3(5.45)
Muslim	0(0.00)	2(7.41)	2(3.64)
Children variables			
Mean (SD)			
Mobility	1.32(0.69)	1.05(0.22)	1.20(0.54)
Self Care	1.68(0.63)	1.67(0.58)	1.67(0.6)
Usual Activities	1.12(0.33)	1.05(0.22)	1.09(0.28)
Pain/Discomfort	1.68(0.69)	1.33(0.48)	1.52(0.62)
Anxiety/Depression	1.72(0.79)	1.57(0.68)	1.65(0.74)
EQ-5D-5L index value (Thailand)	0.68(0.12)	0.73(0.11)	0.71(0.12)
ASQ Score-communication	45.56(21.36)	47.5(17.10)	46.5(19.23)
ASQ Score-Gross Motor	53.52(14.86)	58.33(3.8)	55.78(11.29)
ASQ Score-Fine Motor	37.96(13.68)	47.39(13.64)	42.3(14.33)
ASQ Score-Problem Solving	25.74(17.58)	34.79(19.14)	30(18.71)
ASQ Score-Personal-Social	45.74(15.61)	53.48(9.82)	49.3(13.70)
Parents variables			
Count (%)			
Mother's Education			
None	5(17.86)	8(30.77)	13(24.07)
Less than High School	20(71.43)	15(57.69)	35(64.81)
Above High School	3(10.71)	3(11.54)	6(11.11)
Father's Education			
None	5(20)	2(9.09)	7(14.89)
Less than High School	17(68)	16(72.73)	33(70.21)
Above High School	3(12)	4(18.18)	7(14.89)
Mother's Work			
Accountant	0(0.00)	1(3.7)	1(1.82)
Company Work	0(0.00)	1(3.7)	1(1.82)

	School		
	Montessori	**Local**	**Total**
Construction	1(3.57)	0(0.00)	1(1.82)
Cook (Housewife)	1(3.57)	0(0.00)	1(1.82)
Daily Worker	1(3.57)	1(3.7)	2(3.64)
Factory	1(3.57)	0(0.00)	1(1.82)
Factory Worker	1(3.57)	2(7.41)	3(5.45)
Farmer	2(7.14)	2(7.41)	4(7.27)
Housekeeper	2(7.14)	2(7.41)	4(7.27)
Housewife	4(14.29)	2(7.41)	6(10.91)
Laundry	0(0.00)	1(3.7)	1(1.82)
Look After Children	0(0.00)	6(22.22)	6(10.91)
Restaurant Worker	0(0.00)	1(3.7)	1(1.82)
Shopkeeper	6(21.43)	1(3.7)	7(12.73)
Teacher	0(0.00)	1(3.7)	1(1.82)
Unemployed	8(28.57)	6(22.22)	14(25.45)
Wooden Factory Worker	1(3.57)	0(0.00)	1(1.82)
Father's Work			
Boat Driver	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Car shop	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)
Company Work	0(0.00)	2(8.00)	2(4.08)
Construction	2(8.33)	2(8.00)	4(8.16)
Construction Worker	3(12.5)	8(32.00)	11(22.45)
Daily Worker	2(8.33)	1(4.00)	3(6.12)
Driver	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Factory Worker	1(4.17)	3(12.00)	4(8.16)
Farmer	4(16.67)	1(4.00)	5(10.2)
Driver	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)
Immigration Police	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Painting	0(0.00)	2(8.00)	2(4.08)
Pastor	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)
Security Guard	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Shopkeeper	4(16.67)	0(0.00)	4(8.16)
Stone Factory Worker	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Trader	1(4.17)	0(0.00)	1(2.04)
Unemployed	2(8.33)	0(0.00)	2(4.08)
Welding	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)
Workshop	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)
Workshop (car)	0(0.00)	1(4.00)	1(2.04)

Data collection and measures

A general household survey was administered to adults and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) was administered to children. The general household interview contained questions pertaining to parental income, household appliance ownership, the number of people per room, whether the respondent had seen soldiers, whether the respondent had witnessed gunfire, and whether soldiers had harmed the respondent.

The age 54-month ASQ was administered to all children in the study (Squires, Bricker, & Potter, 1997). The ASQ generally consists of tasks rather then test questions, rendering it easy to administer in cross-cultural settings. The questionnaire is divided into the following categories: gross motor, fine motor, communication, problem solving and personal-social. The questions were read to participants by one of two multi-lingual interviewers who were fluent in every language spoken by the parents and children in the sample (Burmese, Karen, and Shan). The 54-month ASQ was administered irrespective of the students' age because the students and their parents often did not know their correct age. By applying a test from the upper end of the age distribution, we were able to achieve more variability in test scores than we might have had we applied tests based on the "best guess" of the correct age of each child.

Children were scored on a scale from 0 to 60 based on their performance of certain tasks and activities. If a student scored below a certain cut-off, professionals recommended that the child be referred for a proper diagnostic assessment to determine if there is a developmental delay. Parents, educators and health professionals can use the scores, whether below or above the cutoff, to assess the different development needs of children and respond accordingly. According to Saihong (2010), the ASQ "has great potential for adaptation in Thailand" and is positive in that it encourages teachers and parents to consider the importance of child development in early childhood education (p. 98).

This test was selected by Khom Loy over the tests within the NIH toolbox or other alternative cross-lingual testing modalities because it does not require a computer to use, it measures a broad range of developmental outcomes (e.g., social and motor as well as cognitive outcomes), and because it is relatively brief and simple to execute. The downside of the ASQ is that it's cognitive measures are much more rudimentary than the comprehensive battery of cognitive and spatial tests that are available. This study, however, was limited by the needs of the Khom Loy Development Foundation, which originally collected the data. The data was obtained by the researchers as secondary, de-identified data after the testing had occurred.

With respect to the ASQ testing, the same sets of identical materials were used to assess all children. The ASQ was administered to children who were removed from the classroom in groups of roughly three children, who were then separated. The surroundings were similar in all settings (a shaded, quiet outdoor space just outside of the classroom). However, given the large number of children per classroom and the limited staff resources, it was not always possible to keep other children from entering the test environment. Dental data were collected by a medical doctor who conducted a brief visual examination of the child's mouth and rated dentition by the number of teeth with visible decay.

Statistical analyses

The primary outcome measure was the ASQ score. Our approach was to use a difference in difference model, which estimates improvements from the baseline assessment to the year 1 assessment within and across groups. The study was powered to detect roughly an 8-point difference in ASQ scores at an alpha of 0.05 and a beta of 0.8. However, educators on our team felt that a 3-point difference was meaningful. Therefore, the study was underpowered to detect a meaningful difference in outcome measures.

RESULTS

During the study, researchers found some evidence for Montessori's positive impact across the ASQ domains. During the baseline assessment, students at the Montessori school all scored lower than those at the control school. In the follow-up assessment, the students at the Montessori school lessened or closed the gap across all five domains.

Communication

The scores of students at both schools increased dramatically. The children at the Montessori school had scores that were similar to those of their counterparts (a gain of 0.05 points, $p = 0.99$).

Gross Motor

During the follow up, the students from the Montessori school improved their scores on the gross motor assessment by 4.5 points, whereas the students from the control school improved by less than 1 point, resulting in a non-significant but sizable gain of 3.6 points ($p = 0.27$).

Fine motor

At the baseline assessment, the control group scored 9.5 points higher on the fine motor domain relative to those at the Montessori school. In the follow up, the Montessori group scored less than 7 points lower than those in the control group, for a net gain of 2.5 points ($p = 0.56$).

Problem solving

Both groups performed poorly in the problem-solving domain during the baseline assessment, with the control group scoring 34.8 and the Montessori group scoring 25.7, about 9 points lower than the control group. In the follow up, the control group improved their scores by 12.5 points. The Montessori group decreased the gap, gaining 17 points for a difference of 4.3 points ($p = 0.49$).

Personal-social

Here, we found a statistically significant difference in the personal-social domain. During the base-line test, the Montessori group scored over 7 points lower than their counterparts. In the follow-up assessment, however, they scored 1 point higher than those in the control group, for a gain of 8.8 points ($p < 0.05$).

Overall, the Montessori students achieved a total score of just 208.5 points at baseline, reflecting this group's severe disadvantage going into school. The control group scored 240 points overall, a better, but still poor, performance. Nine months later, the control group (with a score of 277) and the Montessori group (with a score of 263 points) were much closer, closing the gap by 18 points. However, these large overall gains were within the range of chance variation in the score ($p = 0.33$). When a more sensitive joint test was applied across each regression, seemingly unrelated regression, we did find that the differences between the groups were statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Although this study lacked adequate statistical power to detect any but very large differences between groups, we nevertheless found that exposure to Montessori classrooms produced an improvement in the personal-social domain of the ASQ. While the total score was not statistically significant in the standard difference-in-difference approach, it was statistically significant when a more sensitive joint test was used. This suggests that the consistently larger improvement in ASQ scores across domains was not due to chance alone.

Our results are difficult to frame within the context of the larger literature on refugee education because so very little is known about the Shan or the Karen. These groups have largely gone without access to schools. Rather, discussions with UN and non-governmental organizations have suggested that most education occurs in "jungle schools," or informal schools headed by whatever literate and numerate adults are available in the area (Su & Muennig, 2005). Given this, it is perhaps remarkable that the baseline abilities of these children are so close to age-appropriate means for the ASQ in general. It is also true that the entire field of refugee education research is highly under-developed relative to other areas of education (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Pinson & Arnot, 2007).

The large impact in the personal-social domain might possibly be explained by the structure of the Montessori classroom (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). Greater opportunity for free choice and child-directed learning may give value to children's own agency, thereby reducing interpersonal conflict (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000). Advanced students have time throughout the day to work with others or independently, while needy students may be able to receive more direct attention from their teachers. Having intermittent breaks from other children could give them needed respite from an otherwise intensive social environment. It might also give them a chance to reflect and learn through experience how to best deal with challenging social situations. Preschool and kindergarten are often children's first time in a structured setting with a large number of other children (Borghans, Duckworth, Heckman, & Ter Weel, 2008; Heckman, 2013; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006). Rather than forcing all the students together, assuming they develop, learn and interact in the same way, Montessori education appreciates these differences and encourages students to value their own strengths and interests. By allowing children to choose their own materials and take responsibility for their learning, self-efficacy could conceivably lead not only to improvements in social skills but also (further down the line) to improved cognitive functioning (Bandura, 1993).

Early childhood education has been identified as an integral period of time to lay the foundation for future success (Heckman, 2013). In impoverished settings, in particular, "school readiness, or the child's ability to use and profit from school, has been recognized as playing a unique role in escape from poverty in the United States and increasingly in developing countries" (Engle & Black, 2008). Though there is increasing recognition of the importance of early childhood education, there is the unfortunate tendency to underemphasize the importance of interpersonal skill development in favour of academic and work-related skills (Heckman et al., 2006; Heckman 2013). Such skills may be even more important for future success than cognitive skills (Heckman et al., 2006).

The World Bank (2014) states: "the skills developed in early childhood form the basis for future learning and labor market success, and failure to develop these skills can negatively affect educational attainment and productivity and earning potential". The foundation for success, however, rests on not only the accumulation of specific skills and knowledge but also on nurturing and promoting healthy child development. The five domains assessed by the ASQ are the developmental areas critical to the foundation for future achievement (Squires et al., 1997). The core goals of early childhood education tend to promote and maximize positive development in these areas (Saihong, 2010).

Research has provided evidence that "high quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs produce short and long term positive effects on children's cognitive and social development. High quality childcare can predict academic success, adjustment to school and reduced behavioral problems for children in first grade" (NAEYC, 2014). Child-centred classrooms are becoming more popular around the world as "high quality" due to increasing research that promotes the importance of providing playful learning, hands-on activities and independent choice. These classrooms are more likely to encourage intrinsic motivation and positive peer interaction as well as long-term achievement gains (Lillard, Lerner, Hopkins, Dore, Smith & Palmquist, 2013; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). This case study adds to the existing research by providing evidence of Montessori education's success personal-social development as measured by the ASQ.

Our study was subject to a number of limitations. First, and most importantly, the study did not have the requisite number of students needed to detect meaningful differences in ASQ scores. Therefore, while we can say that Montessori classroom conversion appears to produce meaningful benefits in the personal-social domain, we cannot make such claims for other domains. The post-hoc SUR analysis that we conducted does suggest that the net impact of Montessori was positive across all domains. Second, while difference-in-difference models can serve as a quasi-experimental approach to program assessment, they fall short of powerful randomized trials needed to fully assess the approach we study here.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this study encourages non-government organizations, government agencies and international agencies working with refugee populations to consider Montessori education as an effective early childhood intervention to promote school readiness and lay the foundation for future success. Fazily (2012) calls for more attention to be paid to "the importance of programs that address the needs of refugee families and how these programs can lead to more collaborative and successful home-school partnerships" (p. iv). Though recent US and European-based studies have provided evidence that "adult-centred learning environments are less positive for young children than more active, child-centred approaches", this type of program has had minimal testing with refugee populations (Lillard et al., 2013). Our study provides a link between the push in early childhood education for child-directed education and the need for high quality education programs for refugee children. Given the instability and trauma they face, refugee children are in great need of educational interventions that promote both academic achievement and positive child development.

Our study, though limited in sample size, provides evidence for the success of Montessori education in achieving these goals, at least insofar as non-cognitive traits predict future success. Our difference-in-difference model uses a quasi-experimental approach, thereby providing stronger evidence for the outcomes we find than simple regression models. However, much more work must be done before we will know whether implementing the Montessori method actually does a better job of meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of their refugee students. Future research might focus on the socio-emotional benefits of the Montessori method in the refugee context as well as on the cognitive benefits. It is possible, too, that the Montessori method's focus on teaching relevant and useful real-world skills assists refugee students in regaining a sense of normalcy. The ASQ does not test for this, however, and more research in this area is needed as well. High-risk students, including those who have been displaced and been exposed to high levels of stress, are in great need of more effective educational methods that respond to their unique situations and appropriately take into account their strengths and vulnerabilities. It is critically important to understand how to best approach this population. We hope this study will encourage educational policy-makers and leaders to rethink education in refugee settings and better respond to the needs of students and educators.

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Under-resourced, undervalued, and underutilized: Making the case for teachers in refugee and emergency contexts

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Teachers are a critical resource for children in refugee and emergency settings. Yet few studies have examined what motivates or demotivates teachers, especially in refugee and emergency contexts. In this article we explore the key findings from field research conducted in Algeria and Ethiopia by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of a study for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The findings are organized according to seven critical factors: teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment; the teaching environment; certification; professional development; incentives; management structures; and, status and social recognition.

Keywords: teacher retention; refugee education; Algeria, Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

Equitable access to education for children and youth is a critical focus in international education. Little attention, however, has been given to *teachers* and the role they play in delivering quality education and achieving the "Education for All" priorities and "Millennium Development Goals". Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2007) argue that even in the world's best school systems, the quality of the teacher is a primary driver of variation in student learning outcomes. While teacher quality is also recognized as a primary driver of variation in student learning outcomes in refugee and emergency settings, few studies have examined on-the-ground realities that motivate or demotivate teachers in these contexts (Penson, Yonemura, Sesnan, Ochs, & Chanda, 2011).

Based on an examination of secondary source materials from academic experts and grey literature from United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), we identified seven key areas affecting teacher retention worldwide: (1) teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment; (2) the teaching environment; (3) certification; (4) professional development; (5) incentives; (6) management structures; and (7) status and social recognition. These seven themes were discussed with and endorsed by 13 education experts from around the world who serve as leading senior education specialists in academia, at major think tanks and research institutions, and in refugee and emergency contexts. Using these seven critical areas as a framework, we explore what motivates or demotivates teachers in the most extreme and challenging of environments, where education is focused on developing and sustaining individuals and communities, and

supporting healthy and productive lives despite the temporary or protracted nature of their circumstances. Citing original research from distinct refugee contexts in two countries, we explore the key issues that influence teacher retention in complex emergencies and offer suggestions for cost-effective policies and technical responses that would reinvigorate teaching forces, attract new teachers, and reinforce the value we as education practitioners place on education for all.

METHODOLOGY OF OVERALL STUDY

After a thorough literature review (West & Reeves, 2015), we designed a set of protocols for gathering basic quantitative data and qualitative findings from the education priority countries of the UNHCR. While the overall study included a survey administered in eight priority countries as well as in-depth research in Algeria, Ethiopia, and Pakistan, this article concentrates exclusively on the qualitative findings specific to the refugee contexts in Algeria and Ethiopia. In June 2013, author Hannah Reeves conducted field research in two Somali refugee camps and two Eritrean camps in Ethiopia; in October 2013, author Amy R. West conducted field research in two of the largest Sahrawi refugee camps in southwestern Algeria. Together, our findings and supporting information bring into sharp focus certain patterns consistent with a demotivated and weakened teaching force in refugee settings and the effect this has on the quality and consistency of education services delivered in these environments.

Methodology of Field Research in Algeria and Ethiopia

As the body of existing research shows, teachers are a critical resource for children in refugee and emergency settings. In our research on the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers in this environment, we conducted 10-day field missions each to two Somali and two Eritrean camps near Jijiga and Shire, Ethiopia, in June 2013, and to two Sahrawi camps near Tindouf, Algeria, in October 2013. The field visits were constrained by funding, the logistics around visiting the camps, and security. We were only able to access camps after receiving formal permission from each country's government and with the cooperation of UNHCR's country representative and collaboration with UNHCR country office teams. Prior to the field visits, we created an interview schedule in partnership with the UNHCR country teams and implementing partners responsible for education service delivery in the camps. We requested to meet with as many individuals as possible, with special attention to recruiting both female and male participants; members of different religious, social, and ethnic groups; young and old individuals; new as well as experienced teachers, head teachers, and supervisors; and NGO and UNHCR staff members with various responsibilities related to education. UNHCR and its partners coordinated meeting venues and participants, as well as interpretation services as needed.

Based on the conceptual framework we developed during our literature review, we created three tools to conduct open-ended qualitative inquiry, a method that allowed us flexibility to explore the seven key areas of interest as well as any additional unforeseen patterns that emerged during discussions. On site, we collected data through focus groups and semi-structured interviews with individuals representing ministries of education, regional educational directors and supervisors, head teachers, teachers, and parent-teacher associations (PTAs). Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes, and each individual interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. We did not record the focus group discussions and interviews, but the author responsible for that specific country field

visit took detailed notes.

In both country contexts, we conducted our research using a set of three protocols developed with the assistance of an experienced psychometrician for two kinds of focus group discussions and one type of semi-structured interview. One open-ended protocol, created for focus group discussions with teachers, head teachers, and supervisors, comprised questions pertaining to selection and recruitment processes, certification and training, professional development opportunities and classroom observations, access to and availability of resources and equipment, management and accountability structures, incentives (monetary and nonmonetary), working conditions, status and social recognition, community support, and future aspirations. A second protocol, developed for focus group discussions with parents and community members, concentrated mostly on status and social recognition as well as the perceived value of education in that community. The focus group discussion protocol also covered the deployment and selection of teachers in the camps, management, and accountability structures as well as whether teachers were appreciated or paid enough and the working conditions in the school environment. In addition, we used a brief, 15-question survey interview protocol to obtain information from UNHCR staff in country offices supporting education programs in the camps. Questions in this tool mainly addressed monitoring of partners delivering education services in the camps; the qualifications and experience of teachers, head teachers, and supervisors in camp schools; how compensation was determined when camp education structures were initially created; and the selection, recruitment, and placement process for new teachers.

In both cases, our research findings led to a number of context-specific suggestions. We therefore argue for cost-effective interventions that would support teachers in these types of settings and ultimately strengthen the quality of education available to refugee children. We base these suggestions on the evidence at hand. For, as a director of education in the Sahrawi camps put it, "Education is the only refuge for the children. This is the only place where children in the desert can go" (Regional Education Director, personal communication, Smara camp, Algeria, 6 October 2013).

Algerian context

Southwestern Algeria has one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world. Large numbers of people fled Western Sahara after the Spanish withdrawal in 1975 and the ensuing land conflict that erupted in the wake of the Spanish departure. From the beginning, education was one of the highest priorities in the Sahrawi refugee camps, and the Sahrawi camp education system is relatively advanced compared with other refugee camp education systems. However, a number of current global crises severely affected the camp's teachers and the ongoing quality of service delivery: (1) the global economic recession, which has reduced education assistance funds from countries such as Spain and Venezuela; (2) the Arab Spring, which has reduced Sahrawi student teacher exchange opportunities with Libyan, Syrian, and Tunisian higher education and teacher training institutes; and (3) the pullback and withdrawal of NGOs and NGO resources following the kidnapping of humanitarians working in the camps in 2011.

Five refugee camps exist near the border of Western Sahara in Algeria. The oldest of these was created more than 35 years ago and constructed by the refugees themselves (mostly female), with the international community arriving later to provide relief services.

Author Amy R. West visited two of the largest refugee camps, Smara and Laayoune, and held focus group discussions in both camps with regional education directors, school directors (or head teachers), supervisors, teachers, parents, and UNHCR's sole implementing partner for education, the Association des Femmes Algériennes pour le Développement. Across the two camps, about 80 individuals participated in interviews and focus group discussions. The majority of these individuals were females (about 60%). Among the female teachers interviewed, teaching experience ranged from 2 to 30 years. Among the male teachers interviewed, teaching experience ranged from 2 to 38 years. Among the inspectors and head teachers, range of experience in these managerial/supervisory roles was 2 to 10 years. In the Sahrawi camps, all personnel within the education system are refugees.

Ethiopian context

Ethiopia hosts a number of different refugee populations from its neighbouring countries, with the largest refugee populations comprising individuals from Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. There are currently 23 refugee camps in Ethiopia, located around Assosa, Dollo Ado, Gambela, Jijiga, Semera, and Shire. Our field research in Ethiopia focused on (1) the Eritrean refugee context in northern Ethiopia near the city of Shire and (2) the Somali refugee context in eastern Ethiopia near the city of Jijiga. Though these populations are slightly less exposed to the global crises affecting the Sahrawi camps, significant challenges exist. These include the large influx of unaccompanied minors from Eritrea, lack of recognition of Somali teaching credentials, and a pay discrepancy within the camps between refugee and host country teachers. Furthermore, the resources available to support education in these refugee camps are woefully inadequate.

In eastern Ethiopia, author Hannah Reeves visited the Sheder and Aw-barre camps (Somali refugees) and in northern Ethiopia the Mai-Ani and Adi Harush camps (Eritrean refugees) and held focus group discussions in each camp with teachers, parents, community members, and implementing partners. Across the four camps, over 100 individuals participated in interviews and focus group discussions. The majority of these individuals were males (approximately 75%) and the remainder females. In the Ethiopian camps, the teachers and education administrators were a mix of refugees and Ethiopian nationals.

FRAMING THE SEVEN KEY AREAS AFFECTING TEACHER RETENTION THROUGH FIELD RESEARCH

The Algerian and Ethiopian contexts are but two examples of protracted emergencies in which people's ability to surpass the status quo relies on first gaining access to any education and then fighting for a quality one. Achieving equitable access to a quality education requires creating systems that address the same age-old challenges experienced everywhere: qualifications of available teachers and the ability to create professional development opportunities for them; standards for a process of recruitment, selection, and deployment; and effectiveness of teacher management structures that are supported by communities who value learning and understand it as both a necessity and a right. The stakes are even higher in settings where options for mobility and access to opportunities outside the perimeters of a camp are severely limited—people's lives have been "placed on hold" and, in effect, compartmentalized due to conflict or crisis. Indeed, the quality of education in these contexts will be a direct reflection of the resources available and the

priorities of not only the refugee community but also the international community on which the population depends.

Our findings from the Sahrawi, Eritrean, and Somali refugee camps illustrate the complexities around recruiting, professionally training, deploying, and retaining quality teachers in complex and protracted emergencies. The retention of not just *any* teachers but, rather, *good* teachers is a challenge. Using the seven key thematic areas from our literature review, we explore the relationship between the education services provided and the teachers serving in these environments.

1. Teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment

Though existing research identifies a lack of transparency in teacher recruitment and selection as an important demotivator (Bennell, 2004; INEE, 2011), the extent to which this applies in the Sahrawi refugee context remains unclear. The Sahrawi Ministry of Education (SEM) routinely announces openings through the *wali* (camp governor), who spreads the information by word of mouth, but few teachers commented openly on the degree of transparency they perceived in their selection, recruitment, and deployment. Furthermore, staff from the UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were unable to report on the decision-making process, which is not shared with the international and local agencies supporting the camps (personal communication, 6-12 October 2013). In Ethiopia, however, a number of refugee teachers complained about the lack of transparency in the selection process (although teaching positions are posted publicly). In several focus group discussions, refugee teachers said they were not allowed to see the relevant selection criteria, and they accused the implementing partner managing the school of nepotism.

It has been noted in the literature that recruitment challenges and high levels of teacher attrition are often present in refugee contexts (Chapman, 1994), and this is true in both the Algerian and Ethiopian contexts. In the Sahrawi refugee context in Algeria, there are more teaching vacancies than individuals wanting to be teachers,[1] and the declining number of students wanting to work in education is cited as a key challenge (representative from Sahrawi Ministry of Education, personal communication, Rabouni, Algeria, 6 October 2013). Instead, young people are reportedly more interested in pursuing degrees in law or opportunities in commerce. The same issue is present in Ethiopia, where many would-be teachers pursue other professions within the refugee camp that are perceived to be more lucrative or more respected, such as health worker.

Recruitment is made more difficult by the challenge of teacher dropout. Often, teacher attrition is driven by the need to find more lucrative employment. In the camps in Algeria, the SEM stated that 3 to 4 percent of its teaching force does not show up for work at the start of each school year, but others claimed that this is not accurate and in their schools it is often more than 50 percent (representative from Sahrawi Ministry of Education, personal communication, Rabouni, Algeria, 6 October 2013). Teacher turnover was cited

[1] There are no secondary schools in the Sahrawi refugee camps. Up to 8,000 Sahrawi students who are eligible to pursue secondary education are placed in Algerian secondary schools each year, paid for by the Algerian Ministry of Education.

as an issue in Ethiopia as well, with refugee teachers alleged to have a markedly higher attrition rate than Ethiopian teachers teaching at the same refugee camp schools.

It has been argued that high attrition rates can result in the recruitment of unqualified and underprepared teachers (which, in turn, further exacerbates teacher turnover) (Chapman, 1994). Parents in the Sahrawi camps felt that the quality of teachers varied from school to school; at the primary level, especially, parents mentioned there were teachers without teaching certificates and teachers with a university degree who were not "quality" teachers. Parents claimed that many qualified teachers (and qualified potential teachers) had lost interest in teaching because of poor incentives, an unsupportive and deteriorating teaching environment, and family responsibilities, and that this had led the SEM to resort to hiring unqualified teachers to fill positions. Some blamed deteriorating teacher quality on teachers' inability to keep abreast of new teaching methods and approaches due to the inaccessibility of the outside world from such remote environments. Similarly, teachers in refugee schools in Ethiopia complained of isolation and a lack of access to current materials and up-to-date subject area knowledge.

2. Teaching environment

Existing research has noted that the provision of safe and comfortable schools with sound infrastructure can be challenging in refugee and emergency settings and that the lack thereof—along with excessive workload—can negatively affect teacher motivation (Harding & Mansaray, 2006; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). In the Sahrawi camps, there was no uniform standard for the construction or repair of a school, and there were no safety or inspection standards. The SEM had no additional resources to improve the teaching environment, and resources made available by donors were being invested in student materials or in supporting secondary education for students outside the camps, not in camp teachers or school structures. UNHCR and UNICEF field representatives commented on a lack of functioning toilets, limited availability of tables and chairs, roofs collapsing from termite infestation, and scarce material resources. There was no electricity in the schools, and classrooms were poorly lit. Some classrooms had small windows to allow in light, but there was no glass (nor doors) to keep out the desert sand. One female head teacher in the Sahrawi camps asked,

> If the floors are destroyed, if the desks and tables are broken or not enough, if there are no books for teachers and students to use, and if the roofs are caving in, how will this encourage a teacher to come into this world each day and do her job? (personal communication, 8 October 2013)

In Ethiopia, both refugee and national teachers alike discussed the difficulty of adjusting to the isolated environment and harsh climate of the camps, having come from large urban areas such as Mogadishu or Addis Ababa. Both Ethiopia and Algeria's refugee camps had little or no access to updated content or curriculum. In some refugee schools in Ethiopia, the Eritrean curriculum was taught in some grades and the Ethiopian curriculum in others. This presented a challenge for students and teachers, and it created issues in preparing students for Ethiopian national exams. One teacher complained that teachers lacked freedom to decide what to teach in their classrooms or how to interact with their students, resulting in demotivation and a loss of effectiveness. In the Sahrawi camps, the Algerian curriculum was followed, though not every teacher had access to an updated syllabus or teacher's guide.

The schools in both countries' camps were mostly lacking subject matter guides, organizational and management resources, tools for facilitation, visual aids, and classroom equipment. The teachers in Ethiopia reported a lack of basic instructional materials in their classrooms, and they expressed a desire for designated playing fields for their students. Most of the teachers in the Eritrean and Somali camps wished for a fence around their schools' grounds to help them monitor their students and to increase security (though most teachers in both settings reported that safety and security were not significant concerns at school). Some teachers in both countries complained of the long distance they had to walk to reach the school—these complaints came from both national teachers walking from outside the camp and from refugee teachers who sometimes traversed no less than 35 kilometres between home and school, sometimes in inclement weather and extreme heat. Many of the teachers in both countries also reported working long hours and working harder than they would in other available positions. Overcrowded classrooms were also frequently cited in the context of unfavourable teaching environments.

Existing scholarship has also highlighted the extent to which psychological trauma associated with violent conflict can affect teachers (Penson & Sesnan, n.d), and this was evident in both the Algerian and Ethiopian contexts. Parents in one Sahrawi camp noted the psychological stress that the perceived poor teaching and learning environment had on teachers (personal communication, Smara camp, 9 October 2013). In addition, several teachers in both countries reported having students with discipline issues, psychological problems, and a lack of motivation. Some teachers felt demotivated themselves by their perceived inability to "reach" their students or adequately address the trauma and related problems with which their students were grappling. One teacher at an Eritrean refugee camp school indicated that teachers had to be careful when reprimanding students because the students were emotionally fragile (personal communication, Adi Harush camp, 19 June 2013). Another mentioned that many of the students were orphans without primary caregivers and, therefore, there was often no responsible adult with whom to discuss a student's behavioural issues (personal communication, Adi Harush camp, 19 June 2013).

3. Certification

Current research suggests that a lack of recognition of existing teacher credentials and a lack of access to certification are significant issues for refugee teachers. The absence of a global standard for emergency credentialing of teachers, in many cases, makes it extremely difficult to source would-be teachers from refugee populations and ensure that standards of pre-service training safeguard the quality of education provided (Penson et al., 2011).

Refugee teachers' credentials are frequently not recognized by the host country, which means they cannot be formally employed as teachers nor given appropriate compensation (Penson & Sesnan, n.d.). This was a significant issue for Somali refugee teachers in Ethiopia because neither the education completed nor the teaching certification obtained in Somalia are officially recognized by Ethiopia. Somali teachers at one school said they had to "restart their education" in Ethiopia, some having to go back to the eighth grade to obtain a secondary certificate. The difficulty of studying toward a teaching certificate was compounded by the geographic isolation of the refugee schools and the lack of opportunities for professional development.

In the early years in the Sahrawi camps in Algeria, "anyone who could read and write" was recruited to be a teacher—the issue of certification was not as pressing as the need to educate students (Sahrawi Ministry of Education representative, personal communication, 6 October 2013).[2] As time went on, teacher qualifications increased, with trained teachers graduating from Algerian, Cuban, Libyan, Spanish, Syrian, and Tunisian teacher training institutes and universities in the 1990s and 2000s. The SEM accepted certified teachers from any country's teacher training institute as well as individuals with a bachelor's (or higher) degree from a university.

However, the quality of the teaching force in the Sahrawi refugee camps has declined again over the last 10 years as access to accredited teacher training institutes has become more limited. The teacher training institutes in Algeria have been shut down for the last 10 years due to the lack of Algerian students pursuing a teacher career track, and other countries have experienced political or economic crises that have limited the assistance they provide potential Sahrawi teachers. In response, the Sahrawi education system's standards have eased again. For example, the SEM has started accepting those completing lower secondary classes into a one-year program at a teacher training centre established in the refugee camps, the quality of which has never been independently evaluated. This reduction in standards has had a ripple effect on the quality of education provided to Sahrawi children over time.

4. Professional development

Existing research has highlighted the difficulties associated with providing ongoing professional development and support to teachers in refugee and emergency settings, and the remote refugee camp settings in northern and eastern Ethiopia certainly present considerable professional development challenges (Mpokosa, Ndaruhutse, McBride, Nock, & Penson, 2008). Teachers at all four camps visited in Ethiopia indicated that the geographic isolation limited opportunities for professional development training and for interaction with colleagues beyond the camps. One of the few opportunities available to a small number of teachers at Sheder and Aw-barre camps is a summer course at the Jijiga Teacher Training Institute. The summer course, however, is a significant source of contention because of the limited number of slots available and the perception that "only refugee teachers" or "only national teachers" have access to it (personal communication, Sheder and Aw-barre camps, 13 June 2013).

Throughout focus group discussions, new teachers in the Sahrawi camps also lamented the lack of teaching materials that they knew existed in other countries. They reported feeling burdened by their lack of Internet access and inability to afford transportation to engage with their Algerian colleagues or international counterparts (for all but one of the Algerian camps, the nearest town, Tindouf, is 15 to 45 km away). Formal professional development in the Sahrawi camps was largely limited to varying degrees of pre-service training; there were generally no resources to provide reference tools or supplemental materials, let alone the training in how to use them. Though SEM has stated that it monitors teachers' professional development needs, these data have not been made

[2] The Sahrawi refugee camps were initially settled by women who fled the war in Western Sahara and who were largely responsible for establishing the camps, including the education system. When the Spanish withdrew from Western Sahara, there were only a handful of qualified teachers left among the local population.

available to UNHCR or UNICEF. UNICEF staff indicated that SEM does not value baseline indicators and performance measurement that would assist in professional development programming.

In this context of scarce professional development resources, the teachers in the Sahrawi camps reported creating informal professional development systems among their peers. Despite the challenges, the Sahrawi teachers have created a culture of peer training and teacher-to-teacher support. Teachers in one camp met and exchanged resources and feedback informally with each other on a daily basis and also spent 2–3 hours a week on formal feedback on lesson plans and subject-specific matters. The newer teachers, mostly females, said that the more experienced teachers assisted them in lesson planning and also sometimes observed their classes, giving feedback on ways to strengthen their teaching (personal communication, Smara camp, 8 October 2013). One teacher reported that he took the initiative to travel to Tindouf to observe classes in a town school. One of the school's instructors let the Sahrawi teacher take over teaching for a session and then provided feedback that the Sahrawi teacher reported finding extremely helpful (personal communication, 7 October 2013).

5. Incentives

Although research suggests that monetary and nonmonetary compensation can improve teacher retention (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007), providing such compensation is often challenging in refugee settings, and complaints about compensation were universal in the Sahrawi, Eritrean, and Somali camps. In both Algeria and Ethiopia, refugees do not have a legal right to work; instead, they receive a stipend. In Ethiopia, teachers complained of low pay and expressed frustration that people in other professions with similar educational and professional backgrounds were better paid. The issue of unequal pay for refugee versus national teachers was an additional source of resentment for refugee teachers in Ethiopia.

In the Sahrawi context, the "peace period" (defined here as beginning in 1992) brought a reduction in the amount of humanitarian assistance provided and a corresponding deterioration in living conditions. Teachers are treated the same as the rest of the population (for example, they receive ration cards and hygiene kits), but the stipends they receive have been constant for more than a decade, significantly limiting what they are able to purchase in the local market where prices have increased over time.[3] While other jobs are more attractive, they are difficult to obtain, and 95 percent of teachers are unable to obtain a second job because of the extent of their teaching commitments (specifically, the amount of time they must spend on teaching, grading, and preparation) (personal communication, Laayoune camp, 12 October 2013).

[3] As a point of comparison, according to a representative from the Algerian Ministry of National Education, preprimary and primary Algerian national school teachers in the area of Tindouf are paid $700–$1,000 a month, lower secondary school teachers are paid $600–1,200 a month, and upper secondary school teachers are paid $800–1,400 a month. The figure of $33 a month as a stipend for Sahrawi refugee teachers is not based on a labour market assessment. The arbitrary assignment of $33 a month began in 2008 when UNHCR divided the total budget line for teachers' stipends by the number of teachers in one of the largest Sahrawi refugee camps. This figure was then applied to the other Sahrawi refugee camps and has not been adjusted since.

6. *Management structures*

The existing body of research highlights that the absence of effective management can affect teacher retention and morale (Sommers, 2004). Several teachers at Eritrean and Somali refugee schools in Ethiopia reported perceiving a lack of support from their school management, evidenced by infrequent observation of their teaching in the classroom and a lack of feedback. Numerous refugee teachers also identified a lack of access to administrative camp services (such as resettlement and protection services), which are intended for all refugees living in the camp but are often only available during school hours. Somali refugee teachers at one school reported having very little contact with the camp administration: "I've been teaching here for four years, and no one from the camp administration visits me" (personal communication, Aw-barre camp, 14 June 2013).

Additionally, a representative from the leadership at another Ethiopian camp reported in one interview that refugee teachers sometimes had to miss class to collect their rations and that deductions were taken from refugee teachers' incentive payments whenever they missed class. Teachers reported that this reflected a lack of understanding by management and that it reduced their motivation to work. One camp community member cited the example of a female refugee teacher who missed class to take her daughter to the hospital and had her incentive payment reduced substantially as a result. In addition, most refugee teachers indicated that they were responsible for finding their own replacements if they wanted or needed to take leave—a challenging task because replacements are not paid.

In the Sahrawi camps, the challenges were different and were mostly related to alignment of management support structures. Many in the Sahrawi camps felt that the management structure was supportive but not as effective as it could be. In these camps, it is not the Algerian Ministry of National Education that makes decisions but rather the Sahrawi Ministry of Education, established as part of the government in exile (personal communication, Laayoune camp, 10 October 2013). Teachers claimed that the education system management provided needed emotional and psychological support. However, one teacher characterized the alignment of processes for reinforcing support structures—from retaining new teachers to engaging more experienced teachers to strengthening the role and capacity of head teachers, supervisors, and ministry officials—as questionable:

> The management is only as good as the teachers. Efforts at the bottom will create a strong structure; if where you put your foot is not strong enough, you will fall down. You do not build a house and start with the roof; you move the body forward with your feet. (personal communication, Laayoune camp, 10 October 2013)

Parents in the Sahrawi camps also acknowledged that management and accountability varied from school to school. Where classes were overcrowded, teachers and head teachers had more difficulty managing classrooms and maintaining schools. "With overcrowding," one parent said, "the strength of how people manage decreases significantly" (personal communication, Laayoune camp, 12 October 2013).

In Ethiopia, both national and refugee teachers reported feeling like outsiders, and they missed being part of a teachers' union (they do not have access to an Ethiopian union because the refugee schools where they work are privately administered; thus, they are not government employees). On a related note, several teachers also expressed a strong desire to be "linked to the outside world" through a teachers' association that could provide access to their peers and additional resources. A desire to connect with a local

teachers' union in Algeria (where professional syndicates are strong) was expressed in the Sahrawi camps as well.

With regard to decision-making, teachers usually reported that NGOs in charge of education service delivery made most of the decisions about education in the refugee schools. Some teachers indicated that their PTA was very active, while others complained that the PTA existed "in name only." Some teachers reported a language barrier between themselves and the school director, which inhibited communication between teachers and the school leadership. One national teacher complained that the NGO responsible for his school had no local education expertise and that the designated person in Addis Ababa did not understand the realities on the ground in the camps.

7. Status and social recognition

Research suggests that opaque, unfair, or altogether absent employment policies as well as pessimistic or disapproving attitudes toward teachers can negatively affect teacher retention and recruitment efforts (Duthilleul, 2004; Nieto, 2003). In the case of both the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria and the Eritrean and Somali refugees in Ethiopia, the absence of the formal right to work undermines the teachers' professional status. However, the attitudes and behaviours exhibited toward teachers by the Sahrawi community were exemplary. "Education is noble. It helps a community develop. Without education a society cannot produce doctors, engineers, and architects," said one Sahrawi teacher (personal communication, Smara camp, 7 October 2013). Teachers are respected as part of Sahrawi tradition. The older Sahrawis remembered the strength of the Spanish-run education system. They remembered the collapse of this support and the efforts that went into rebuilding the camp education system (almost no teachers were left in Western Sahara when the Spanish withdrew). One refugee teacher with 38 years of experience said,

> We began teaching with the will to serve. It was a duty and a humanitarian cause we believed in, as we saw our children without teachers. Education is part of the community we have built; illiterate people cannot express their rights. (Personal communication, Laayoune camp, 12 October 2013)

This respect for education as a basic necessity has been embedded in the society as part of its culture, but circumstances and attitudes are changing. Numerous Sahrawi parents felt that the absence of teacher qualifications and insufficient expertise were two of the most important issues the community faced in witnessing a decline in educational quality (personal communication, Smara camp, 8 October 2013, and Laayoune camp, 12 October 2013).

Refugee teachers in Ethiopia, however, painted a more complicated picture of their status within the community. Both refugee and national teachers seemed to agree that they received positive recognition from their communities but that the teaching profession is not highly regarded in Ethiopia. As one Somali teacher explained: "The social status of teachers in the Somali community is very low—teachers are not seen as capable and productive citizens [by their peers]" (personal communication, Sheder camp, 12 June 2013). Another teacher commented, "Even my mom discouraged me from becoming a teacher" (personal communication, Sheder camp, 13 June 2013). It is interesting to note that several teachers said their work was moderately more respected in the refugee schools because the surrounding communities saw the impact of their work firsthand. A number of teachers asserted that the lack of respect for the teaching profession was

associated with low pay. One refugee teacher remarked that refugee teachers in particular (more so than Ethiopian national teachers) were not respected and did not have the same power and authority as national teachers.

SUGGESTED POLICY AND TECHNICAL RESPONSES

Retention of quality teachers is vitally important to educational quality. This is particularly true in refugee and emergency settings, where education resources are stretched so thin. As the World Bank (2010) notes, "If teachers work and live in an environment where they consistently have insufficient resources to accomplish what is expected of them, they can grow increasingly de-motivated" (p. 22). We offer the following suggestions for cost-effective policy and technical responses to the seven categories of teacher retention issues we have discussed within the refugee and emergency contexts. These suggestions are drawn from our review of the literature and from the qualitative data we collected in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria and the Eritrean and Somali refugee camps in Ethiopia.

Recruitment, selection, and deployment. A transparent process with known criteria for teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment in refugee settings must be in place. This process—whether managed by a government in exile in the camps, a host country government unit, or UNHCR and its implementing partners—should place emphasis on ensuring that a teacher cadre is prepared to enter the classroom (i.e., that they have received quality pre-service training focused on key competency areas). In order to reinforce this process, it is also important that each country tracks the progression of these teachers, including initial recruitment, migration (if applicable), and retention over time.

Teaching environment. Given the harsh and often isolated environments in which refugee camps are located, it is critical to track the deterioration of the school environment over time. Monitoring the effects of the natural environment on the physical infrastructure of camp schools is critical to ensuring safe and healthy teaching and learning environments that can be maintained and reinforced as they erode over time. In addition, all schools need to have access to psychological counselling (for teachers and students). Furthermore, service providers should ensure that all schools are separated from the surrounding areas by an uninterrupted fence or wall, classrooms are adequately lit, and teachers have access to a well-lit space in the evenings for lesson planning and other preparations. On an individual country basis, service providers should take steps to improve the safety and ease (i.e., distance, security) of teachers' commutes to and from school.

Certification. To standardize the requirements for teaching qualifications and certification in refugee settings, UN agencies and governments should advocate for increased cross-border cooperation. They should also collaborate on concrete regional strategies and policies that would retain teachers and attract new teachers, allowing individuals to access teacher training institutes in host countries and helping teachers to grow professionally in the midst of the hardships of forced migration.

Professional development. Service providers should establish a regular schedule for classroom observation and feedback in conjunction with a clear plan for improving teacher performance over time. Ideally, structures should be put in place that allow teachers to interact with local teacher training institutes and teachers' unions (or other

host community networks and resources) and to expand access to professional development opportunities for teachers in refugee contexts. In-service support, consistent feedback from well-trained supervisors, and mentorship, especially for new teachers, are important in retaining the best teachers.

Incentives. An initial and periodic local labour market analysis would ensure that teacher incentives or stipends are adequate and appropriate based on the cost of living and the other jobs available to individuals with similar educational attainment or experiences.

Teacher management structure. As with teacher evaluation and feedback, systems should be put in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of school leadership and to provide opportunities for teachers to give feedback on head teachers, supervisors, and management. Routine feedback from teachers on the performance and behaviour of the implementing partner responsible for education service delivery, as well as those within the education leadership and management structure of the camp, should be encouraged, and this feedback should be used to guide programmatic and system-wide change.

Status and social recognition. Refugees should receive clear communication regarding their legal status and rights (e.g., the right to work). Additionally, in cases where refugee teachers are paid less than their national counterparts, they should be made aware of this (and the reasoning behind it) during the interview process and as part of their biannual or annual portfolio reviews. Schools and teachers should be intimately involved in the creation of a teacher code of conduct, and schools should develop a strategy to engage the local community in activities or policies related to teacher appreciation, support, and respect.

CONCLUSION

The realities experienced in refugee and emergency educational settings can be quite daunting, but in the quest to provide education for all, it is important to remember one of the most fundamental variables in that equation: teachers. In contexts like the Sahrawi, Eritrean, and Somali refugee camps in Algeria and Ethiopia, where resources are limited, focusing on the recruitment and retention of good teachers is imperative.

In addition, for education service delivery providers in refugee or emergency contexts, it is important to set expectations and be consistent at the local and even regional level. Harmonizing processes for recruiting, training, and supporting teachers is critical when there are multiple actors delivering services who are accountable to one coordinating body such as UNHCR or a ministry of education. This requires establishing clear expectations with these actors, or implementing partners, on the delivery of education support and services and revisiting these expectations on a regular basis. Such expectations could include, for example, uniform criteria and processes for teacher recruitment, selection, and deployment; minimum standards for equipment and facilities at refugee schools (and the maintenance of equipment and facilities over time); equitable distribution of equipment and supplies to refugee schools; harmonized incentives and other nonmonetary benefits (e.g., transportation, school cleaning) across all implementing partners in the camps; a transparent (i.e., publicly posted) incentive scale for all sectors available at each camp; a clear, consistent, country-level policy on the curriculum to be taught in all refugee schools; and strict monitoring requirements for implementing partners and education management in refugee settings.

Addressing teacher retention across the seven areas explored in this article can provide a helpful framework to mitigate some of the obstacles associated with teacher motivation, satisfaction, and retention. The compounding factors present in refugee and emergency settings create a unique and under-researched lens through which to view the issue of teacher retention. Furthermore, cost-effective policies and technical responses that begin to address teacher retention challenges will affect student achievement, reinvigorate teaching forces, and attract new teachers to serve in even the most difficult contexts.

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