

SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH AND TEACHER SUSTAINABILITY:
CANADIAN OFFSHORE SCHOOLS IN EGYPT

by

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ABSTRACT

Global mobility of the workforce and competition to attract and retain top talent compels organizations to develop healthy workplace environments that support employee engagement, well-being and retention. Within the education sector, many studies examine issues surrounding teacher retention, however, only a few studies were found that examine expatriate teacher turnover in international schools. While these studies contemplate the role of the workplace environment, they do not examine expatriate teacher turnover from a workplace health perspective. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to determine if workplace health plays a role in expatriate teacher sustainability in international schools from the perspectives of expatriate teachers, and in doing so, provide a new way to think about the role of international school environments in supporting expatriate teacher sustainability.

Teachers were interviewed at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt and qualitative data analysis was undertaken using inductive thematic analysis. The findings of this study revealed that workplace health plays a role in expatriate teachers' decisions to leave or remain working at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Supportive relationships with administrators and colleagues, opportunities for career development and growth, job challenge, work demands and adequate compensation and benefits were among the features described by expatriate teachers as important to retention. Other reasons to stay were associated with the development of relationships beyond the schools and personal motivations.

A number of implications arise from this study that may help to support expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. In addition to elements

associated with workplace health, specific recommendations obtained from teachers concerning the recruitment process and the role schools can play in providing support to teachers to build relationships within and beyond the schools shed light on important issues that can serve to enhance teacher retention.

This research supports prior literature and provides a new lens through which to view teacher retention in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. The first-hand perspective of expatriate teachers demonstrated in this study reinforces the role of workplace health in employee retention and provides information to support international workplace practices and recruitment and retention strategies toward organizational sustainability.

PREFACE

Ethics approval obtained from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board Okanagan, UBC

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

The world of work is undergoing substantive change. Increased mobility and migration of professionals in the 21st century, coupled with local and national employee shortages, require employers to develop and nurture workplace environments that support organizational effectiveness, employee health and retention (Chu & Dwyer, 2002). Internationally, it is recognized that the development of healthy workplace environments is key to organizational success and to the economic and social sustainability of nations (Chu et al., 2000). This is demonstrated by the development of international partnerships and networks toward health promoting workplaces (Chu et al.).

Despite the recent economic downturn, the education sector reported a global shortage of teachers associated with several factors, including an increased migration of teachers within and between regions (International Labor Organization, 2009). Within the privately run international education sector, the extent of teacher mobility and turnover is difficult to ascertain due to the independent nature of these schools (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009).

Even with limited available data, the degree of teacher turnover in countries that host international schools is demonstrated by several sources. For example, 2005/2006 figures from the Council of International Schools' annual survey illustrates a 14.4 percent teacher turnover in the 270 international schools that participated in the survey (Henley, 2006, as cited in Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). In addition, there is a high turnover among foreign teaching staff within Canadian Offshore Schools in China (Scheutze,

2008), and teacher turnover within U.S. International Schools is high, especially among foreign teaching staff (Howard 1985; Draper 1981, as cited in Hawley, 1994).

While it is generally agreed that a certain amount of employee turnover within organizations is healthy and brings in new ideas and innovation, high levels of turnover can create and result in poor organizational performance and functioning (Ingersoll 2001). Within the education sector, the success of schools is dependent on a strong sense of community and cohesion between teachers, students and parents (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Durkheim, 1961; Grant, 1988; Kirst, 1989; Parsons, 1959; Rosenholtz, 1989; Waller, 1932, as cited in Ingersoll, 2001). Excess teacher turnover can be disruptive to the school climate and can compromise the school's sense of community, stability and overall performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

In addition to the human costs, the financial costs organizations bear as a result of high employee turnover are significant (Dess & Shaw, 2001). In the case of international schools, these costs are magnified as a result of high expenses associated with international teacher recruitment. (Skinner, 1998, as cited in Odland & Ruzicka, 2009).

Teacher turnover also has implications for the teaching workforce in the developing world. For example, increases in primary school enrollment in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, will require an estimated 18 million new primary school teachers to meet the "education for all" objectives for universal primary education in 2015 (International Labor Organization, 2009).

While traditional approaches to address teacher turnover have sought to increase teacher supply as a means to meet the demand, recent research indicates that

the teacher shortage has more to do with the organizational conditions and environment of the schools than a lack of supply (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Martinez-Gardia & Slate, 2009). For example, research on teacher shortages conducted by Ingersoll and Smith using data from the National Center for Education Statistics found that of those teachers who left the profession within the first year of teaching, 75% cited reasons related to dissatisfaction with the school environment and pursuit of another job. Indeed, healthy organizational environments contribute to organizational performance and success, and provide the type of workplace conditions that can help to reduce employee turnover.

The Imperative and its Significance

Review of expatriate literature provides a starting point to understand factors related to expatriate retention and turnover. While research demonstrates that intention to stay is a predictor of turnover (Bluedorn, 1981; Dougherty Bluedorn & Keon, 1985; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Pierce & Dunham, 1987; Williams & Hazer, 1986, as cited in Gregersen & Black, 1990; Gregersen & Black, 1992), intention to stay is largely related to personal characteristics that facilitate adjustment to a foreign culture. While expatriate adjustment is important to retention, it does not explain turnover as a function of the organizational environment.

Similarly, within the educational literature, much research has focused on individual characteristics that lead to turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). For example, younger teachers have a high rate of turnover, with 40 – 50% leaving the profession after 5 years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Of the studies that have considered the relationship

between the school environment and teacher turnover, most do not pertain to international schools. Odland & Ruzicka, 2009 and Hardman, 2001, provide the only two studies found that examine factors associated with expatriate teacher turnover in international schools. While both studies examine features of the school environment that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability, they do not do so from an organizational health perspective.

Thus in summary, it can be demonstrated that there are four important limitations in the literature, which create a compelling opportunity for further study. 1) There is a limited amount of research and data that describes the extent of teacher turnover in international schools 2) There is minimal research about the organizational conditions that contribute to teacher turnover 3) Only two of the studies found consider organizational factors related to teacher turnover in international schools. 4) While school organizational health is directly related to teacher commitment and turnover, research on school organizational health and its relation to teacher sustainability in international schools cannot be found. The gaps identified provide an opportunity for research to further knowledge about issues that relate to teacher sustainability in international schools.

The Context: Canadian Offshore Schools

There are two types of foreign schools described in the literature: offshore schools and international schools. The purpose of this section is to distinguish Canadian Offshore Schools and to provide a general overview of the structure and governance of Canadian Offshore Schools in order to provide context for the setting of this study.

Offshore schools are a specific type of non-public school that is relatively new. In “Canadian Offshore Schools in China”, Scheutze (2008) cites the work of Conradi (2007) to explain the ways offshore schools in China differ from international schools in their student composition, funding model and curriculum. His description provides a useful way to conceptualize the nature of Canadian Offshore Schools in other countries, including Egypt.

Scheutze (2008) states that students enrolled in BC Certified Offshore Schools in China are mainly from within China, as compared to expatriate students enrolled in International Schools, whose countries of origin are varied. BC Certified Offshore schools in China are privately owned and thus follow a proprietary model, versus international schools which are run as not for profit schools. The operation of BC Certified Offshore Schools in China is authorized by provincial and municipal Chinese authorities and run by Chinese nationals or partners according to a prescribed organizational structure. Finally, Scheutze states that the curriculum in BC Certified Offshore Schools is a blend of western and eastern. The western curriculum is taught by BC Certified teachers and several mandatory subjects are taught in Mandarin by Chinese teachers. In contrast to a blended curriculum, international schools teach western curriculum.

In terms of the governance, the regulatory framework of Canadian Offshore Schools varies by province. For example, BC Offshore Schools fall under the BC Ministry of Education and are regulated by the Independent Schools Act (Federation of Independent Schools Association, 2010). BC Offshore schools are subject to an initial external evaluation for certification purposes and external evaluation every two years

thereafter. Like other independent schools they are inspected every year (Scheutze, 2008). There are currently eighteen BC Certified School Programs in Offshore Schools. sixteen are in the People's Republic of China and one each in Egypt and Thailand respectfully. Another 3 schools are in pre-certified stages, two of which are in the People's Republic of China and one in Korea (Offshore programs list, 2009). Graduates of these schools are issued a BC Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma) as well as a Chinese High School Graduation Diploma.

Under agreement with the Ministry of Education, Ontario offshore schools, which are referred to in the literature as "overseas schools", provide a similar program of Ontario Certified curriculum, however they are not as strictly governed as BC Certified schools. For example, Scheutze (2008) states that once these schools are certified, no further inspections or evaluations are required on the part of the Ontario government. There are currently 20 Ontario Certified schools located in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Italy, Singapore, Egypt, Netherlands, Japan, Trinidad, Switzerland, Malaysia and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies (Offshore programs list, 2009).

Similar to schools within the public system, privately run Canadian Offshore Schools have high levels of turnover of out of country teaching staff (Scheutze, 2008). This thesis is intended to further knowledge about the issue of teacher turnover in Canadian Offshore Schools and in doing so, help contribute to the limited amount of literature in this area.

Research Purpose

Within the scope of an organizational health perspective, the aim of this thesis is to examine the organizational conditions that contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. For the purposes of this thesis, the working definition “teacher sustainability” has been developed to describe a teacher’s desire to stay working at the school they are currently working in. This is more fully described in Chapter Two. While Canadian Offshore Schools operate in many countries, adequate sampling afforded the selection Egypt as the country in which to conduct this study. This was due to the fact that access to expatriate teachers at the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt was permitted and welcomed by senior level administrators and their boards. Thus, research participants invited to participate in this study included expatriate teachers from Canadian Certified Offshore Schools in Egypt.

The research undertaken in this thesis was guided by the following primary and secondary research questions:

- 1a. Does school organizational health contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?
- 1b. What other factors are important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?
- 2a. From the perspectives of expatriate teachers working at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt, what are the most important factors associated with their professional decisions to stay at or leave the schools?
- 2b. What do expatriate teachers at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt recommend to help promote teacher sustainability at these schools?

The intended outcome of this research is to address the thesis questions. A description of features that are most important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore schools in Egypt and teacher-identified recommendations will be provided as a means to inform school administrators and boards of Canadian Offshore School organizational practices that may assist with their recruitment and retention efforts.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Healthy Organizational Environments: The Significance

Globalization has led to rapid changes in the social and economic relationships of individuals, regions and countries across the world (Chu & Dwyer, 2002). For employers, these changes have been accompanied by greater migration and mobility of employees leading to substantive changes in the nature of work and employment practices across the globe (Chu & Dwyer).

In order to be sustainable, organizations have a major role to play in the development of healthy and supportive workplace environments. For example, the emergence of a “settings approach” to workplace health is a development in the management of organizational environments aimed to promote the health and sustainability of employees and organizations (Chu et al., 2000; Chu & Dwyer, 2002). This development, supported by the World Health Organization and international partnerships and networks, has become an international movement (Chu et al.).

Employee retention is one type of organizational capital that can be built by a healthy organizational setting (Lemerle, 2005). Examining the organizational environment as a determinant of teacher sustainability requires an understanding of the qualities and practices that shape a healthy organization and the impact of these practices on employee and organizational outcomes. The purpose of this section is to provide a brief historical and conceptual background of the study of organizational environments and to demonstrate the significance of healthy organizational environments on employee outcomes and organizational success.

The Emergence of “Organizational Health”

The study of organizational environments emerged in the business literature in the late 1950's (Anderson, 1982, Lemerle, 2005). As cited in Anderson, while the fields of psychology and education were focused on the influence of personality traits on behavior (Schneider & Bartlett, 1968), organizational behavior researchers were among the first to examine employee interactions with organizations and consider the environmental factors that influence individual behaviors, decisions and wellbeing.

The earliest publication found was Argyris' 1958 article, “The Organization: What makes it healthy”. Argyris was among the first to consider the organization's health as a system, and its impact on employee and organizational outcomes. For example, by examining an allegedly healthy production plant, Argyris posited that its management structure did not allow for employee creativity, independence or responsibility. In other words, the factory management system did not support the needs of psychologically healthy individuals and thus was not a healthy organization. A true pioneer in this field, Argyris believed that organizational health had far reaching implications for work and society.

In 1965, Miles formally introduced the term “organizational health”. He described it as an organization's sustainability; its ability to survive, cope, grow and develop (Miles, 1969). Miles posited that organizational health and employee effectiveness are founded and sustained by specific properties that include clear goals and communication, morale, effective use of skills and the ability to innovate, problem solve and adapt. (cited in Lemerle, 2005).

In 1965, Schein was also working to develop a framework of what he believed

were the key five criteria of organizational health. He stated that healthy organizations are able to 1) sense environmental change, 2) get information to the right places, 3) digest and utilize information, 4) adjust and transform itself without destruction, and 5) obtain feedback on consequences of transformations. Like Miles, Schein's five criteria relate to an organization's ability to adapt and change to be sustainable.

Since early work in the field, there has been a growing body of literature that has informed the work-health relationship across the disciplines of occupational health and safety, health promotion, education, psychology, sociology, and economics (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004; Grawitch, Gottschalk & Munz, 2006). However, despite the work of early thought leaders, organizational health research and practice has focused largely on individual health outcomes (Grawitch et al.) instead of focusing on the broader socio-economic, environmental and organizational conditions that support positive employee and organizational outcomes (Chu et al, 2000).

The 1990's marked an increased focus on the broader organizational and environmental influences on employee and organizational outcomes (Lim & Murphey, 1999; Chu et al., 2000). This change is demonstrated by the emergence of a global "settings approach" to organizational health, supported by the World Health Organization and several emergent international partnerships and networks (Chu et al.) as well as the advancement in workplace health research across a variety of disciplines (Lowe, 2004; Shain, 2001).

The Qualities of Healthy Organizations

There is a substantial amount of literature to inform the qualities of healthy organizations (Chu et al., 2000; Lim & Murphy 1999; Lowe, 2004, 2010; Grawitch, Gottschalk & Munz, 2006; Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004). Among the features of health promoting workplaces, organizational qualities, the physical environment, health and safety, the nature of the work and the demographic and lifestyle data are prominent categories (Chu et al., 2000). Within the category of organizational features, baseline indicators of healthy organizations include workplace culture, leadership style, work group cohesion, division of labor, autonomy, shift work, award structure, defined career paths, workload, involvement in decision making, communication, equity, power and control related to responsibility, job satisfaction and morale and relationships with outside communities (Chu et al.).

To develop a model of a healthy work organization, Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson and McGrath reviewed the organizational health literature and found consensus that a healthy workplace consists of three primary areas (2004). The first area is the way the job is designed. This includes control over workload, autonomy, role clarity and environmental conditions. The second area is the climate of the organization, which is comprised of the social and interpersonal aspects of the workplace. The climate of the workplace is described the way employees perceive their work environment (Wilson et al.). It includes elements such as support from the organization and colleagues, communication, participation and involvement and health and safety. The third element, Wilson et al., stated, is job future, which encompasses

security, compensation, opportunities to learn and advance and flexibility in work arrangements.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that healthy organizations are built on the ability to respond and adapt to changing demands; provide allowance for meaningful contributions, flexibility and reasonable demands; and espouse a climate that nurtures healthy, supportive relationships among the people that work in the organization. These organizational characteristics have wide reaching implications for the health and sustainability of organizations and positive outcomes, including employee retention.

The Benefits of Healthy Organizations

The study of organizational health has provided an understanding of the impact of organizational environments on organizational and employee outcomes (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004). A healthy organization is defined as “one whose culture, climate and practices create an environment that promotes employee health and safety as well as organizational effectiveness” (Lim & Murphy, 1999). Thus, while organizational health fosters employee health and wellbeing, it has also been linked to productivity, effectiveness, competitiveness and financial health of an organization (Lowe, 2004).

Healthy organizations have better employee performance, engagement, recruitment and retention and lower rates of absenteeism, health care costs, and injury (Anderson, Serxner & Gold, 2001; Brown, 2000; DeJoy & Wilson, 2003; Huslid, 1995, as cited in Grawitch, Gottschalk & Munz, 2006). Specifically, employee commitment to

the organization has been associated with lower turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, as cited in Grawitch et al.).

Employee perceptions of a healthy workplace have also been linked to positive organizational outcomes. For example, a 2003 study by Lowe, Schellenberg and Shannon provided evidence to support that employee perceptions of a healthy work environment are associated with job satisfaction, commitment, increased morale and less absenteeism and intent to quit.

In summary, healthy workplace practices support employee wellbeing and positive organizational outcomes including employee sustainability. In the context of this thesis, the work environment is the school.

School Organizational Health

Educators have recognized for many years that the school environment is important to the social, emotional and academic experiences of students and teachers (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009). School organizational health research was founded upon early work in the business-related disciplines and emerged in the literature in the late 1960's under the semblance of "school climate" (Anderson, 1982). Since that time, a large body of empirical work has been undertaken to understand the school workplace environment and its implications associated with teacher and student outcomes (Hoy, 1990; Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoy & Tarter, 1992; Lemerle, 2005, Lindahl, 2006; Nir, 2002; Tsui & Cheng, 1991). The purpose of this section is to describe school organizational health and to review the literature that pertains to school

organizational health and teacher sustainability in local and international schools, in order to develop a conceptual framework.

What is School Organizational Health?

The school environment has been conceptualized and studied within three broad areas: school culture; school climate and school organizational health.

School organizational culture refers to the shared values, assumptions and norms of the school environment (Ashforth, 1985, as cited in Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991). It is described as the character, ethos or feeling within the organization, which is organic in nature, shaped by time and place and is not overly responsive to manipulation or change (Hoy et al.). In contrast to organizational culture, organizational climate is described as the measurable qualities of the school environment as perceived by teachers that can be influenced by relationships, personalities and leadership. (Hoy, 1990). The climate of the organization is viewed to affect individual behavior and organizational outcomes and is open to interventions and change (Hoy).

School organizational health is a term used to describe the general wellbeing of the school and its members that encompasses aspects of climate and culture (Hoy & Feldman, 1987). For example, Hoy describes Miles' taxonomy of healthy organizations to explain that the foundational theory of organizational health arose from Parsonian social systems theory, which provides a useful framework to examine and measure school climate in the context of health (Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoy, 1990). Viewed this way, Hoy states that a "health metaphor" can be can be applied to describe "school organizational health" (Hoy & Feldman).

Using a health metaphor to describe the school environment, Hoy and Feldman (1987) explained the following:

A healthy school climate is one in which the technical, managerial, and institutional levels are in harmony. The school is meeting both its instrumental and expressive needs; and it is successfully coping with disruptive outside forces as it directs its energy toward its mission. (p. 32)

The success of schools also depends on a strong sense of community and cohesion between teachers, students and parents (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Durkheim 1961; Grant, 1988; Kirst, 1989; Parsons, 1959; Rosenholtz, 1989; Waller, 1932, as cited in Ingersoll, 2001). Thus, school organizational health can be viewed as the general wellbeing of the school community built by positive relationships, support, leadership and pride (Hoy, 1990) that supports teacher efficacy, collegiality, student achievement and parent involvement (Peterson, 1998, as cited in Lemerle, 2005).

Health Promoting Schools

Organizational health is an important component of the settings approach to health promoting workplaces internationally (Chu et al., 2000). The World Health Organization's 1995 Global School Health Initiative is aimed toward the development of healthy school settings for learning, working and living in order to improve the wellbeing of students, staff, families and communities worldwide (World Health Organization, 2010). The school environment is an important component of health promoting schools that has demonstrated impacts on student and teacher outcomes, including teacher

sustainability. The next section will outline the concept of teacher sustainability and will demonstrate the relationship between the school environment and teacher sustainability.

Teacher Sustainability

The sustainability and performance of organizations is influenced by employee commitment and retention (Rosenholz & Simpson, 1990, as cited in Nir, 2002). While a certain amount of employee turnover contributes to the growth and health of an organization, excess turnover can be disruptive to the school climate and to the formation of a cohesive, stable and effective school culture (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher turnover, retention, mobility, migration, attrition and commitment are among the terms used by educational researchers and policy makers to describe the movement of the teaching workforce. However, there are inconsistencies in the application and meaning of terms (Macdonald, 1999, as cited in Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006). For example, “teacher commitment” can describe a sense of loyalty to the school, attachment to the profession or commitment to student learning (Kushman, 1992 as cited in Nir, 2002). Among teacher turnover statistics, Elfers et al., indicate that data to capture the turnover within the teaching workforce is dependent on whether teachers are represented as transferring between schools in the same district, transferring between schools in different districts or leaving the teaching profession entirely.

Recently, research to describe teacher mobility and turnover has been classified into three categories: 1. “Stayers” are teachers who stay in the same district or school,

2. “movers” are teachers who move to other districts or to private schools and 3. “leavers” are teachers who leave the teaching profession entirely (Ingersoll, cited in Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006). While capturing data about the “movers” allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the status of the teaching workforce (Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006), for the purposes of this thesis, the working definition “teacher sustainability” has been developed to describe a teacher’s desire to stay working at the school they are at and also within the private offshore school system. This definition aligns with the concept of “teacher turnover” that is found in the international schools literature, but provides a greater level of specificity that is contextually relevant to this thesis.

Teacher perceptions of the work environment have been found to influence whether they stay or leave a school (Lemerle, 2005). As the workplace environment is a significant predictor of employee retention, the focus of this thesis is on factors within the school environment that contribute to teacher sustainability.

Why Teachers Stay or Leave

There are many reasons why employees chose to stay or leave their employer or profession. Individual characteristics, personal factors and the workplace environment have been demonstrated to impact employee retention (Bluedorn; Halaby & Weakliem, 1989; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Kalleberg & Mastekassa, 1998; March & Simon, 1958; Mobley, 1982; Mueller & Price, 1990; Price, 1990; Steers & Momday, 1981, as cited in Ingersoll, 2001).

Among educational professionals, examples of individual characteristics that influence teacher retention include age and career length. For example, teacher retention is higher in teachers who are in mid-career versus new teachers, of which 40 to 50% leave the profession after 5 years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). There is also greater mobility amongst new teachers (NCES, 2005, as cited in Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006) who often transfer to other schools within their district (Elfers et al.).

However, increasingly, the importance of the workplace environment as a determinant of teacher commitment has been demonstrated (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Tsui & Cheng, 1999) and teacher commitment is a predictor of turnover (Cheung, 1990; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982, as cited in Tsui & Cheng, 1999). For example, research on teacher shortages conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics found that of those teachers who left the profession within the first five years of teaching, 75% cited reasons related to the school environment (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Indeed the health of the school environment contributes to teacher turnover. Nir (2002) found that schools characterized by a healthy climate generated higher levels of teacher commitment to the school and to students in comparison to schools characterized by a less healthy climate. Further, characteristics of an unhealthy environment such as an absence of collegial and administrative support and professional development opportunities, student misbehavior, inadequate salary, a lack of autonomy and inadequate allocation of time have been found to contribute to teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Luekens et al., 2004, NCES, 2003, as cited in Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006).

Thus, the examination of contextual factors within the school environment that contribute to teacher sustainability can provide insight into the organizational structures and systems required to support employee retention and organizational sustainability. Among studies that explore organizational factors related to teacher turnover, Ingersoll (2002) considers the organizational characteristics that lead to teacher turnover in American schools. He found that the four most important organizational conditions for motivation, commitment and turnover are: 1) compensation structure, 2) level of administrative support (especially for new employees), 3) degree of conflict and strife in an organization and, 4) employee input into and influence over organizational policies.

Ingersoll's findings about the organizational characteristics that contribute to teacher turnover are not explicitly described as qualities of organizational health in schools. However, a parallel can be drawn, insofar as the organizational characteristics that contribute to teacher turnover, such as employee support and opportunities for input are also features that have been found to contribute to a healthy organization.

Teacher Sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools

There are only several studies found that examine teacher sustainability in international schools. Odland & Ruzicka's 2009 study of expatriate teacher turnover provides valuable insight into the variables that influenced teachers' decisions to leave at the end of their first contract. Odland & Ruzicka's mixed-method study was conducted with population of expatriate teachers drawn from the Council of International School (CIS) database. A total of 281 international teachers completed a questionnaire that was constructed from analysis of the literature regarding teacher turnover. The

questionnaire was based on associative and causal factors that have been linked to teacher turnover. Causal factors were defined as factors that have influenced their decision to leave a school, supported by information teachers have reported in past qualitative studies. Causal factors included school characteristics of administrative leadership, working conditions, compensation, student discipline and academic standards as well as characteristics of the host country and teacher characteristics. Associative factors were described as factors shown in quantitative studies to have predicted associations with teacher turnover, which included school factors such as the size of school, perceived academic strength and proprietary structure and teachers' personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, children and years of experience (Odland & Ruzicka).

Odland & Ruzicka's research revealed three causal factors related to expatriate teachers decision to leave: 1) administrative leadership 2) compensation, 3) personal circumstances. Further qualitative data analysis revealed that another contributing factor to turnover was their perception of profit driven operational decisions of private schools.

Hardman's 2001 dissertation provided the second study found on the topic of teacher retention in international schools. In his research, Hardman considered factors that influence teachers to work at international schools and stay beyond initial contract. He compiled survey data obtained from 30 teachers and managers located at schools in Indonesia, Tanzania, Egypt, Argentina and interview data from teachers in 5 international schools in Buenos Aires. Hardman found that the most frequent reason for teachers joining and remaining in the international school they were working in was the

opportunity for professional advancement, which accounted for 88.5% of responses. From an organizational perspective, 84.6% joined and remained for the happy working climate in school, which Hardman defined as feeling appreciated and respected by colleagues and administration and a sense of security and strong relationships with colleagues and students. Happy working climate was matched in importance by financial incentives and a strong sense of job challenge. Only 48% of expatriate teachers chose to renew their contract beyond 2 years, despite their views that a two-year contract was not a long enough to tenure to fully support student learning (Hardman, 2001). In summary, Hardman's study sheds light on features of the school environment that are important to teacher sustainability.

A related study conducted by Hawley (1995) focused on the topic of turnover among expatriate administrative leadership in international schools. Hawley's study examined the turnover of international school heads from 251 US accredited international schools between 1980 and 1990 (Hawley 1995). His findings demonstrated that among 336 school administrators represented by 251 schools over a decade, the average length of tenure as an international school administrator was 2.8 years. There were 83 school heads that responded to the question of why they left their positions, and the most common response was related to school governance. Other reasons for leaving the schools were associated with personal or family reasons, the characteristics of the school and factors related to the overall working and living environment. Interestingly, administrative support, parent involvement, qualities of teachers, size of school and many nationalities with many expectations, were among the least likely reasons associated with turnover of the school administrators.

Elements of the host country culture are also important to teacher sustainability. Through the lens of personal experience as a UK teacher's first overseas experience, Joslin (2002) provides a conceptual model to capture the complexity of issues faced by teachers working at international schools outside of their home country. She states that there are several layers of cultural factors that impacted her experience, which include the international schools organizational culture and mission, the culture of the local community, including the expatriate community and the regional culture and sub-cultures, her own cultural heritage and the culture of her prior workplace. While her paper describes features of school culture, Joslin also considers host country characteristics as important to teacher experiences. Joslin indicates that complex factors associated with past experiences, organizational cultures and local cultures can affect the success of expatriate teachers in overseas assignments.

Garson (2005) provides a qualitative narrative account of her experience living and teaching in Cairo, Egypt to describe the impact of the local culture on her ability to adapt to academic employment and life in Cairo and the overall meaning of her experience. While Garson's work was not based on an experimental study, she discusses the complexities of adjusting to the local culture and to the culture of the students and school noting differences in the learning culture and the need to adapt curriculum with an aim to create meaning for her students. Garson also discusses the cultural factors that contributed to her desire to leave the country after nine months of teaching to create an opportunity for communication among expatriate academics about their experiences teaching in foreign countries and to further explore the applicability of contemporary management theories and curriculum in classrooms abroad. The author's

expressed experiences supports that cultural factors within the school and local community affect teacher experiences abroad and could have implications regarding their ability to adapt and their desire to stay.

The preceding literature review has informed the development of a conceptual framework to demonstrate research findings related to personal, organizational and host country characteristics that have been associated with teacher sustainability in public and international schools.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER SUSTAINABILITY				
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL		ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL		SOCIETAL LEVEL
Personal		Health of School Environment		Host country characteristics
Self-Reported	Associative	Self-reported	Associative	Self-reported
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal circumstances - Desire to experience new cultures and travel in new countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender - Age - Marital status - Children - Experience - Subject area - Level of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive working climate - Leadership style & support - Strong sense of job challenge & opportunity for professional growth - Working conditions and morale - Communication - Compensation - School governance - Participative decision making - Professional interactions, relationships and social aspects - Appraisal & recognition - Goal congruence - Role clarity - Work demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - size of school - perceived academic strength - ownership structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural expectations

Figure 1: Individual, organizational and societal factors influencing teacher sustainability

Figure 1 sources include Chu et al., 2000; Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006; Garson, 2005; Hardman, 2001; Hawley, 1994 & 1995; Ingersoll, 2001; Joslin, 2002; Lemerle, 2005; Nir, 2002; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004.

Figure 1 demonstrates research that has sought to explain teacher turnover by individual characteristics, organizational factors and host country characteristics. As Ingersoll (2001) pointed out, while much work has been done to understand individual antecedents of teacher turnover, it cannot be fully understood without taking into account the nature of the workplace, which can be defined as its overall health. This framework provides the theoretical underpinnings to inform the direction for research and methods undertaken in this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study was designed to examine factors that contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools from an organizational health perspective.

The research was planned to answer the following research questions:

- 1a. Does school organizational health contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?
- 1b. What other factors are important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?
- 2a. From the perspectives of expatriate teachers working at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt, what are the most important factors associated with their professional decisions to stay at or leave the schools?
- 2b. What do expatriate teachers at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt recommend to help promote teacher sustainability at these schools?

The research was initially intended to be a mixed-methods design. It was designed to begin with an on-line quantitative survey, followed by qualitative interviews to explore key issues in greater depth. However, the on-line survey yielded a response rate too low for a representative sample.

Thus, the research proceeded with qualitative inquiry. Data was collected through in-depth teacher interviews conducted at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Personal visits to the schools provided immersion into the school and local culture, which enabled a rich and contextually relevant exploration of the research topic.

Methods and Procedures

Research Method

The type of research design chosen depends on the purpose of the research, the questions being asked and the personal experiences of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). This section seeks to strategize methods and procedures chosen for the research study, as appropriate to the topic under investigation.

Qualitative research is an interpretive research paradigm that provides a rich, contextually relevant understanding of the issue of inquiry within the natural setting (Creswell, 2003; Fossey, Harvey McDermott, Davidson, 2002; Morse & Field, 2005). According to Morse and Field (1995), qualitative research is appropriate to explore areas that are complex or about which little is known. Qualitative research is also an appropriate method of inquiry when exploring an issue from the viewpoint of the research participant, or the “emic” perspective (Vidick & Lyman cited in Morse & Field; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2002).

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are few research articles that explore issues related to expatriate teacher turnover. Little former research to guide the inquiry, coupled with an aim to gather contextually-relevant information from expatriate teachers about their experiences and perspectives, rendered qualitative inquiry the most appropriate form of research inquiry to understand the issues surrounding teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

Within qualitative research, thematic analysis is described as an analysis method, free from, and adaptable to, any theoretical and epistemological area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is often used in educational research and was chosen as the most

appropriate analytic approach for this research due to its flexible application, thematic nature and ability to capture contextually relevant information. Thematic analysis methods undertaken in this research are described in further detail within the data analysis section of this chapter.

Site Selection

Appropriateness and adequacy are two key criteria for sampling in qualitative research (Kuzel, 1992, cited in Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). An appropriate sample is one that is most fitting to inform the research undertaken (Fossey et al.). Adequate sampling ensures the research setting, subjects, events and types of data can best inform the phenomenon and research question (Morse & Field, 1992).

Canadian Offshore Schools operate in many countries around the world. In designing this research study, adequate sampling was taken into consideration by selecting a country in which to conduct the research where access to the sites and study participants would be permitted.

Access to Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt was made available by senior level administrators in consultation with their boards, who were very supportive of this research at their schools. Interest in the research outcomes to help guide workplace practices and increase expatriate teacher retention was expressed. Approvals were granted by various Canadian International Schools in Egypt, rendering a broad sample representative of many provincial jurisdictions in Canada.

Conducting the research at Canadian International Offshore Schools in Egypt also afforded an in-depth, contextually relevant approach. The aim of this research was

not to generalize the results to the expatriate population as a whole, but rather to examine factors that contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability in one location. Choosing a single country of focus for this research removed the possibility of cultural differences associated with multiple countries, given comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this master's thesis.

Finally, the ability to visit and conduct research at all Canadian Offshore schools in Egypt in person offered the opportunity to be immersed in the research setting and spend time with administrators, owners and teachers at the schools. This enabled a more intimate interaction with study participants and a deeper understanding of the contextual setting in which the research was conducted. It also increased the expectation that the study would yield valuable data.

Participant Selection

Aligned with Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson's (2002) criteria for sampling in qualitative research, study participants were chosen using a "purposive sampling" approach. "Purposive sampling" is described by Fossey et al., as a "strategy designed to maximize the representation of a range of perspectives on an issue to challenge (permeate) the researcher's own views." p. 726.

Research participants were expatriate teachers certified to teach Canadian curriculum, who were teaching at the Canadian Offshore School in Egypt at the time the research was undertaken. It was determined that the greatest range of perspectives to inform the research could be obtained from a diverse sample.

Teachers selected for interviews were at various stages of their careers and contracts with the schools. Some teachers expressed the intention to stay to complete their two year contract or continue with subsequent contracts and others intended to leave prior to the end of their two year contract or after completion of two year or subsequent contracts. Some teachers were single and some had spouses and families.

Overall, the sample chosen represented a broad cross section of expatriate teachers in age, gender, total number of years of teaching experience and total number of years of international teaching experience in Egypt and in other countries. For example, some teachers interviewed had prior international and/or Canadian teaching experience, while others joined the school immediately following university graduation. Some teachers became employed at the offshore schools after retirement from a school in Canada. In summary the length experience teaching in Egypt ranged from 8 months to 6 years and teaching grades ranged from kindergarten to grade 12.

Research Procedure

Early on in the process, a detailed research proposal was prepared and ethics approval was granted by the University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board to conduct this study. An invitation was received to meet with senior administrators of Canadian Offshore Schools in China to share information about the research project and to determine if there was interest to participate.

Subsequently, senior level administrators of Canadian Offshore Schools in China and Egypt were sent e-mail invitations to participate in this study. The formal invitation included a summary of the research proposal and the benefits of participation, in

addition to a copy of the questionnaire and interview guide (Appendix A and B respectively). After several exchanges with the schools, there was a delay in the process required to obtain permissions to conduct the research in China. However, official letters of approval from the school administrators in consultation with their Boards were received to conduct the research at three Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

Upon receipt of the approvals from the school administrators to conduct the research, an information package was e-mailed to the senior administrators at the schools in Egypt, which provided information to distribute to all expatriate teachers at their schools. The information package included three components. The first component was a script for school directors and principals to follow to ensure information about the study was conveyed to expatriate teachers in a consistent manner at each of the schools. The script provided an invitation to expatriate teachers to participate in the study as well as detailed information about the study and the thesis supervisor and graduate student's contact information (Appendix C). The second component in the information package was a general information/FAQ sheet. This document contained information about the study and the process expatriate teachers could undertake to participate (Appendix D). The third component of the information package was the interview consent form (Appendix E).

Shortly after the information package was submitted to the school administrators, an invitation was received to attend Egypt to conduct research at the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Upon arrival to Egypt, an average of one day was spent at each

school, where meetings with the school administrators, school tours and interviews with expatriate teachers took place.

Upon arrival at the schools, meetings and school tours were facilitated by the school principals and senior administrators. At some schools, introductions were made with prospective study participants prior to the interviews. This provided an opportunity to establish rapport, review the goals of the research and interview procedures and to confirm participation in advance. If agreeable to all parties, private interviews were subsequently arranged at specific times and locations within the schools throughout the day. At other schools, introductions were facilitated with expatriate teachers at the time of the interviews. However, the process engaged to build rapport, review the research goals, interview procedures and participation were consistent across all schools.

At the time of the interviews, informed and written consent from the study participants was obtained. A total of eleven teachers were interviewed using semi-structured interview questions. Interviews took place within various settings at the schools including offices, libraries, lunchrooms and classrooms. The interviews were conducted in private with the exception of several interviews in classrooms with students present. Interviews ranged in length from 20-45 minutes.

As described previously, the sample chosen represented a broad cross section of expatriate teachers to maximize the breadth of perspectives obtained to inform the research question. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. A journal was also kept to document impressions after the interviews and during the meetings and school tours.

Data Collection

Interviewing was the primary method of qualitative data collection in this study. While interview formats range from unstructured to structured, Morris & Field (1995) state that semi-structured interviews are most appropriate when the researcher is able to determine most of the questions but is not able predict the responses of participants. As there is very little research conducted in this area, it was determined that the use of semi-structured interviews was most appropriate for this research study.

Semi-structured interviews enable participants to have the flexibility to illustrate, elaborate and provide examples of issues that they believe are pertinent to the questions asked (Morse & Field, 1995). This provides a rich, thick, descriptive text that yields significant content and analysis (Morse & Field, 1995), which is appropriate to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To plan for an effective semi-structured interview format that would facilitate open dialogue and conversation, Patton's (2002) "interview guide approach" was used.

Patton's "interview guide approach" involves the preparation of an interview framework that lists the questions and probes to be asked during the course of the interviews (Patton, 2003). The interview guide allows the researcher to ask questions that will provide a deeper understanding of the research issue being explored (Patton, 2003). Steps were followed to prepare the interview guide using Patton's general guidelines while integrating Morse & Field's (1995) criteria for preparing for a semi-structured interview.

Interview questions were developed and sequenced in a logical order to cover the theme of the research (Patton; Morse & Field). Open-ended, single topic questions, and secondary questions were designed, and probes were included where further questioning was anticipated to fully understand an issue (Morse & Field). Questions were reviewed, pretested and revised to ensure a high quality response (Patton, 2003). The interview guide developed and used as an interview framework for this study can be found in Appendix B.

Patton (2002) states, “the period immediately after the interview or observation is critical to the rigor and validity of the qualitative inquiry” (p. 383). To ensure maximum rigor and validity, a journal was kept to record impressions and observations immediately following the interviews. Notes taken to document details about the research setting, school tours and pertinent information discussed during the meetings with the senior administrators were also important to the process of data analysis, which is described in the next section.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative data analysis begins during the data collection phase and is an ongoing process. To ensure qualitative data analysis procedures were appropriately followed, a journal of observations was kept which was reviewed during the timeframe of conducting the research to look for patterns and points of interest. This process is also consistent with the commencement of thematic analysis, the method of analysis chosen for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is described as a process used to analyze, organize, code and interpret qualitative information (Braun & Clarke; Boyatzis, 1998). It can be used within any domain, tradition, ontology or epistemology of qualitative research and is found within educational and organizational research traditions. (Braun & Clarke; Miller and Crabtree, cited in Boyatzis). Furthermore, it is argued to be a foundational method most appropriate to novice qualitative researchers, given its theoretical and technological accessibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Within the method of thematic analysis there are two types: inductive and theoretical. Inductive or data-driven approaches provide a rich analysis of the entire data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006) where codes and themes are developed from the data and are strongly connected to it (Patton, 1990 cited in Braun & Clarke). Theoretical thematic analysis provides a less-rich description of a particular aspect of the data that is driven by theory and a coding frame (Braun & Clarke).

While inductive analysis enables each theme to be connected back to the research question, it also affords an approach that is true to qualitative research in that it is open to all themes that the data provides (Braun & Clarke). Given there is very little research in this area, inductive thematic analysis was chosen in order to select and capture all information from the data that is relevant to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian International Schools in Egypt.

To proceed with this process, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase process of thematic analysis in qualitative research was chosen, which was found to be the most appropriate and accessible analytical framework. The first phase of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is to organize and familiarize with the data (2006). Upon return to

Canada, recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim with non-verbal utterances into written text with the help of NVivo software. Once transcribed, the transcripts were read through multiple times to obtain a general sense of meaning (Morse & Field, 1995), and to aid the process of developing notes and thoughts in the margins.

Following the second phase of thematic analysis, a coding process commenced which involved making notes in the margins of printed transcripts and later electronically highlighting and marking codes, with the help of NVivo software. Coding was generated inductively from the data, in that it was drawn from the data. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's framework, coding was completed for as many potential patterns as possible, with many items coded more than once depending on relationships between the data.

Once complete, the third phase of data analysis was initiated by organizing the coded information into themes. Groups of coded information was gathered and sorted within each theme, and separate sub-themes were developed with the assistance of NVivo software. A series of hand written mind maps were also developed to enabled a complete visual picture of the emergent thematic map.

Once themes are developed, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe that it is important to review them to ensure they are appropriately constructed, distinct in nature and contain relevant information to that theme. All coded information within each theme was re-read and in some cases re-coded, while other themes were merged, until the information within each category accurately represented the category and the themes were adequately representative of the data.

Upon completion, the fifth phase within Braun and Clarke's framework (2006) was initiated, which consisted of labeling each theme and sub theme. Definitions were

generated and a brief written account of the meaning of each theme within the broader context of the research was developed. This process concluded with completion of reporting on the results, which is detailed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

Introduction

The aim of this research was to determine factors associated with expatriate teacher sustainability from a workplace health perspective. True to qualitative research, the data collected was analysed through a process of inductive thematic analysis described in Chapter 3. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the results of the study and distinct key themes and sub-themes that developed from the data. The themes that were generated inform the research questions and demonstrate aspects of workplace health and other emergent factors that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

From a total of eleven expatriate teachers interviewed, seven participants were within their first two years of teaching at their current school in Egypt, while four were beyond their second year teaching at the school. Five teachers interviewed had prior international teaching experience but no experience teaching in Canada. The remaining six teachers interviewed had experience teaching in Canada, with Egypt as their first international teaching experience. Three came to teach abroad with spouses and families and four had established relationships in Egypt.

In terms of the total amount of teaching experience in Canada and abroad combined, four teachers had more than five years of total teaching experience, while seven were within their first five years of total teaching experience.

In terms of retention, five of the teachers interviewed were planning to stay at their schools in Egypt, while seven were planning to leave. Of those planning to stay, several wished to complete their contracts or had family/relationship ties to Egypt. Of those planning to leave, half reported that they planned to leave within or upon completion of two years of teaching at their current school in Egypt, while the other half planned to leave after three or more years of teaching in Egypt. Of those planning to leave, the majority anticipated they would return to Canada to teach, while several indicated they planned to continue teaching internationally in a different country.

Inductive analysis of expatriate teacher interviews revealed four key themes central to expatriate teacher sustainability. They are: building relationships within the schools, building relationships beyond the schools, a sense of the temporary, and the experiences and insights of expatriate teachers. The four overarching themes contain sub-themes that will be described within each section. A full list of themes and sub-themes generated from the thematic analysis can be found in Appendix F.

Theme One: Building Relationships Within the Schools

Building relationships within the schools was described by many participants as central to a supportive workplace environment and a sense of community. The significance of this sub-theme to expatriate teacher sustainability was captured by a number of participants who argued that a sense of community within the schools is an important factor in the retention of teachers. For example, one participant stated, “You can’t ask for more than a two year contract overseas; but with a sense of community where people are feeling that the school is on the right track, organized and has high

potential; you'll definitely get people who stay for at least a year or two years, or more. But without that sense of community it is hard.”

In particular, participants identified that building relationships within the schools had three important benefits. First, developing relationships creates supportive networks with staff and colleagues in the schools to help navigate the system. Secondly, establishing relationships enables the development of “communities of practice” which was seen as important to best practice, building capacity and sharing experiences. Finally, leadership arose as instrumental to building relationships and teacher support within the schools and will be discussed first.

Leadership

A leadership theme manifested in several forms. First, there was discussion about the availability of school administrators. In some cases, senior leadership was reported to be available all the time, which teachers indicated was important to successful adjustment in a new school culture. It is important to note that participants indicated that certain teachers desire certain leadership styles. Therefore, it is not easy to identify a single leadership style that will please everyone.

Second, leadership was discussed in terms of the role leaders play to help teachers establish relationships beyond the schools and their role in developing a sense of community within the schools. Third, leadership was raised in the context of backup and support for teachers and their teaching decisions. Participants identified this was an important issue, especially for those teachers who were beginning their careers in a new country. Related to this issue is the fourth manner in which leadership support was

discussed, which was the degree to which school administrators were focused on teaching and the benefits associated with this leadership style. For example, one participant stated, “We have an ownership and administration that’s teaching-focused. Education comes first and business comes second, so that is nice.” A focus on teaching implies that the values and practices of teaching are the main priority over and above running the school as a business.

It is important to note, that while not referenced in this particular theme, leadership support arose in other themes. For example, it is discussed in the section of this thesis which describes teachers’ motivations to stay teaching at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. The importance of school leadership was also conveyed by participants when they described the sense of trust and autonomy they experienced when provided with the opportunity to develop and run their own classrooms.

Supportive Networks

Building relationships to create supportive networks in the schools was described by participants as important to “get things done”. In other words, participants indicated that the ability to build relationships with staff, teachers and administrators allowed for a better understanding of the school culture and ability to navigate differences that may exist in Canadian Offshore Schools as compared to schools in Canada. For example, with particular reference to establishing relationships with school staff, several participants stated that to be successful, the ability to build relationships with everyone, from school administrators to cleaning staff was critical, and that this was achieved by respecting, understanding and navigating cultural differences.

Friendships are extremely important to Egyptian staff. If you give them even a little bit of your attention, it goes such a long way. Saying hello, knowing their names and saying thank you is important because they work extremely hard. So, if you can make these networks in the school it will benefit your school life and it will run much easier. You won't feel like you are always constantly battling with things. The key is the bonds and the connections that you make.

It's all about how you treat others, how are you working with others and what kind of attitudes you are displaying. People are very perceptive here and the Egyptian staff knows which teachers to approach or joke with and which teachers not to approach. I don't care if you're a foreigner or if you're a cleaner. It's all the same to me. It's all about respect and your attitude.

The benefits of developing supportive networks within the schools was also described as important to the relationships with immediate colleagues, including teachers and school administrators. This was described by some as important to retention. For example, one participant stated, "I know that I can go to certain teachers and to my principal and I've got support. This school provides a lot in terms of support. It makes you want to stay longer, which is good." When reflecting on collegial support, another participant commented, "This school actually has that set up really well. When I get upset or need help, I know which key teachers I can go to and I didn't have that at my former school."

Communities of Practice

When participants described situations or desires that centered on the concept of building communities of practice within the workplace, three sub-themes were presented which include best practice, building capacity and sharing experiences.

With regard to best practice, an important issue raised by participants was the desire to retain skills while working internationally to ensure their marketability in Canada, should they decide to return. While some teachers viewed the international teaching experience as contributing to this marketability, others did not. For example, one teacher stated, “professionally, I thought [teaching internationally] would be really beneficial because Canada is so multicultural. I would like to gain the experience outside of Canada and then return with that experience to be better-rounded and more aware of cultures that people may have misconceptions about.”

On the other hand, some teachers were concerned that teaching internationally without opportunities for professional development opportunities may be a risk. For example, one participant stated, “you want to feel like the time here is beneficial. You want to feel like when you return, you are not going to be behind”. Another teacher said, “Because we are so far removed, I don’t know any new teaching practices. I came from Canada as a new graduate and I have been overseas for many years, so I don’t have any experience [in Canada] besides my student teaching, so anything that would be new and updated would be good.”

The second area of focus participants discussed related to the capacity to teach in international settings, or “building capacity”. For example, a key issue raised by participants revolved around the notion of current teaching ideas and methods. In some

cases, new teachers were seen as having fresh ideas as compared to senior teachers. However, some participants stated that as a new teacher they did not have fresh ideas. This may indicate two important distinctions. First, new teachers may have fresh ideas from leading-edge teaching methodologies and practices they learned in university. Second, new teachers may lack fresh ideas in terms of actual teaching practices due to limited in-class experience.

This issue can be further complicated by the fact that acquiring new ideas through professional development may not be readily available overseas. With reference to professional development, many participants commented about the opportunity to build a community of practice by means of local resources (i.e. those teaching in Egypt) to create opportunities for professional development and mentorship. For example, some participants indicated that collaboration with other international schools could provide new teachers with an opportunity to share fresh ideas and current teaching methodologies. It would also enable senior teachers to share their ideas and experiences with established teaching practices and methods they have found to be successful in the international school environment. In fact, a number of participants described the clear benefits of modeling from more experienced teachers. For example, one participant stated, "I know that brand new teachers that have just come from university do not need professional development that much. They need to watch our experienced teachers teach just because they have been in Egypt for many years and have had more experience." Other comments expressed the need for, "...not just somebody talking to you about what to do, but a real practice"; "[we]...need teachers to model and emulate." One participant referred to an experienced colleague as "the child

whisperer” when describing the benefits of modeling from other teachers to learn new ideas and teaching strategies that could be applied to high energy students.

Participants also directly expressed the benefits of mentorship support. For example, when describing supportive mentorship provided by the school, one participant stated, “You need mentors. This year, I moved to teach a new grade and my principal provided me with mentors who were two teachers who have been here for three years. It was the most amazing experience and its living up to my expectations of what mentorship should be.”

It is important to note that some participants shared challenges faced in developing supportive relationships with other teachers given the existing levels of turnover within international schools. One participant who had been teaching for one year at a Canadian Offshore School stated:

The problem with all the international schools is that there tends to be a turnover rate that prevents the development of experienced teaching faculty who understand the nuances of the students that they are teaching and so the only consistent group of people here really are the students. It takes new teachers about a year or so to learn to adapt. If we were all here for three years, I think that we would have a much better handle on issues and general efficiencies.

The third area that arose when participants discussed communities of practice was the desire to build relationships with expatriate teachers from other schools, or “sharing experiences”. This sub-theme shares similarities with *building capacity*, however, it is specific to comments made by participants about the benefits of sharing experiences with expatriate teachers from other schools for the purposes of

socialization and networking. As discussed in the other sub-themes, the importance of building communities of practice extends to building relationships with expatriate teachers from other schools to share fresh ideas and teaching practices. This was also explained by participants as important to professional development. For example, one participant stated, “Often international schools are very independent entities. If they are able to collaborate and share resources such as taking turns presenting professional development topics monthly, there would be that sense of community that you find in Canada”.

During the interviews, many participants indicated that opportunities to interact with other expatriate teachers would allow for networking among those with shared experiences. It would also allow for expatriate teachers to interact with other teachers from different schools. As a result, teachers would be able to learn about the various benefits and compensation strategies that other teachers receive from their employers. This may not only serve as an avenue for knowledge and information exchange, but may also provide a means to empower teachers as they learn about the various opportunities that are available. For example, one participant stated, “If we are able to talk with other teachers, it would provide an opportunity to compare benefits such as rental and travel allowance or professional development. We’re a little hub of expatriate teachers that bump into one another and are informally networking amongst ourselves.”

While some networks happen informally, many participants expressed a desire for the schools to arrange for a formal opportunity for teachers from the various international schools to meet and exchange information about their experiences teaching abroad. For example, one participant stated, “encouraging expatriate teachers

to expand their social circles beyond other teachers in the same school would be beneficial. Perhaps the administration could help by having a function between several of the Canadian schools in Egypt so we could meet people outside our own school.”

This view was supported by another participant who stated, “I would like to see the progress other Canadian international schools are making towards bettering their schools. I’d like to know what their students are like compared to mine. It would be nice to be able to visit them.”

Theme Two: Building Relationships Beyond the Schools

The second theme established is “building relationships beyond the schools”. This theme shares similarities with *building relationships within the schools*, in the sense that it highlights discussion about participants’ desires to interact with others and the benefits of relationships. However, this theme is specific to building relationships with non-teachers and Egyptian nationals as opposed to school staff and other teachers.

Overall participants spoke very positively about support they received from Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt to help them settle into their new surroundings. While participants described support to settle in as important to their integration within a new country, participants expressed that building relationships beyond the schools was critical to their adjustment and success. This has clear implications for teacher sustainability.

Participants identified that building relationships beyond the schools provided several important forms of support which include establishing supportive roots and

exposure to the culture. Participants also shared challenges which are associated with building external relationships in Egypt.

Establishing Supportive Roots

Many participants described that building relationships beyond the schools served as a means to establish supportive roots within Egypt. As one participant summarized, “I think if you try to go solo here, it’s not going to work. You’re going to run yourself down and you’re going to be lonely and maybe bored. When you are abroad developing bonds and connections will prevent you from constantly battling with cultural differences.”

In addition, a number of participants described the importance of building relationships with people in the local culture as a means of support beyond the schools and the expatriate community which provided “a sense of home”. For example, one participant commented:

Some people come here and they don’t form the kind of relationships that they’re really going to rely on for the rest of the year. Of course you are friends with your colleagues, but finding friends and families outside of the school that you can spend time with on weekends or having dinner makes the place feel like home. If you don’t forge those relationships, or if you treat it like a temporary situation, you’ll never feel 100% comfortable here.

Exposure to Egyptian Culture

Secondly, participants identified that building relationships beyond the schools allowed expatriate teachers to be engaged in the Egyptian culture in a way that might not otherwise be gained if interactions were limited to Canadian expatriate community. This was seen as important by many participants to help prevent isolation that can result from being a foreigner in a new country.

As one participant described:

As far as the culture here goes, my family and I are pretty isolated right now. When I go home I spend time with my children, so I don't really have that much interaction with the Egyptian community. While we live in a suburb with other expatriate teachers, it is really isolated and you don't really have that much do with the Egyptian community.

Difficulties and Challenges

While the majority of participants discussed the benefits of establishing relationships external to the immediate workplace, several participants described that building such relationships is rather difficult. For example, one participant had previously lived and taught in Egypt, however, after a brief time away, the participant found it very difficult to rebuild social networks. This was in part due to teacher turnover, as the participant described that those she had relationships with prior to leaving Egypt were no longer in Egypt. Further, this speaks to the notion that teaching overseas can be an isolating experience.

Theme Three: A Sense of the Temporary

A third overarching theme identified in the data analysis is “a sense of the temporary”. This theme captures comments that participants made about their experience and motivations to teach internationally and in Egypt, as well as their thoughts about staying in Egypt or returning to Canada.

The significance of this theme is in the interpretation of discourse that took place with participants. Comments made by participants almost always reflect the temporary nature of international teaching, which may be a contributing factor to the challenges associated with expatriate teacher retention in international schools. For example, even amongst teachers intending to stay to complete a two year contract or beyond, many made reference to the temporary nature of their tenure in Egypt. One participant stated, “...some teachers don’t see investing in the school in a substantial way. They don’t always put heart and soul into it; it’s a sense of the temporary for people.” Another stated, “...teaching internationally is great, but it’s not something we’d want to do for 10 or 15 years...” Finally, one participant stated, “A lot of expatriate teachers that are here are young and they don’t want to commit to a long-term situation”. Thus, while this theme contains important information about factors that influence expatriate teacher sustainability, the temporary nature of international teaching assignments should not be overlooked.

Within this overarching theme, comments were categorized into three areas. These included motivations to come, motivations to stay and motivations to leave. While each of these themes is distinct, it is interesting to note that issues related to the culture, school environment, economy and family were relevant to each category.

Motivations to Come

When asked to describe what motivated them to teach in Egypt, participants discussed the benefits of the location and experiencing a new culture, aspects of the school environment, employment potential and motivations related to family.

One popular motivation among expatriate teachers was the draw to a different culture. For example, one participant stated, "...the fact that Egypt has so much history, that's what drew me here, not just the ability to travel. The pyramids were something I always wanted to see, and just immersing myself in another culture is something great."

While some wanted to experience the history and culture of Egypt, others expressed that gaining exposure to another culture as a benefit to returning and living in Canada. For example, one participant commented, "Professionally, I thought that it would really be beneficial because Canada is so multicultural that I would like to gain the experience outside of Canada and then return with that experience. --- I think it is extremely important for people to leave their home and return. Just to gain that perspective from the other side." It is interesting to note the temporary nature of international teaching, demonstrated by this comment.

Finally, many participants also cited travel opportunities as a key motivator to teach in Egypt. It is important to note that this is not just in reference to traveling to Egypt, but rather the flexibility and opportunities to travel to other cities from Egypt.

In relation to the workplace environment, participants identified key important motivators to become teachers in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. These included issues surrounding the Canadian curriculum, career opportunities and the blend of Canadian and Egyptian cultures at the schools.

First, participants spoke about the Canadian curriculum taught at their international school as a motivating factor. For instance, some argued that it reflected the high level of education being taught at the school and a level of quality they wanted to be part of. One participant stated, “I think what attracts people to the Canadian International Schools is the quality of education. We receive feedback from parents continuously indicating that’s why [their children] are in a Canadian international school in Egypt, because of the quality of education they’re getting here.”

Others reported a level of comfort with knowing that they would be teaching the same curriculum they had learned in college or university. For example, one participant stated, “...I think it is very tough when you have so many learning curves to go through in terms of the culture and in terms of moving to a place far afield. I think the familiarity of the curriculum is a very strong draw.”

Participants also described a sense of career opportunity within the schools, in that despite being newly graduated teachers, they were able to have their own classrooms. For example, this was described in contrast to the Canadian experience of having to start out as a part time teacher on-call working at many schools. One participant stated, “...I had an opportunity to develop a program unique to the way I like to teach. Obviously we have a curriculum set out with objectives, but as far as resources and where I want to go with the program, it was left wide open so that was an appeal to come for sure.” In addition, one participant reported the lighter workload as a motivating factor.

Finally, several participants described the blend of cultures at the Canadian Offshore schools in Egypt as an attractor to teach in Egypt.

I enjoy what I learn from the children here and what the people learn from us. We celebrate both heritages and holidays, such as an Arabic day. It really is a Canadian school in Egypt. My favorite part is seeing the excitement in [my students] eyes when I talk about Canada and when they talk about Egypt. It really is about bringing two cultures together.

A number of participants clearly stated that Egypt offered employment potential. Due to the lack of employment opportunities in Canada, many came to Egypt so that they could start working immediately. In relation to the immediate employment opportunities, others indicated that Egypt offered the opportunity to start teaching in their area immediately. This is in contrast to the possibility of having to work as a teacher on call or in an unrelated area back in Canada. For example, one participant stated, "...the reason why I left [Canada] at the beginning was because of the teacher's strike...and then the government laid off half of the teachers which left two or three thousand new graduates without jobs. I waitressed for a year with my degree and somebody said we need [teachers] in China, and I went."

Similar to the employment potential, some participants also suggested that they were motivated towards Egypt because of the money they would be able to save from immediate employment and reduced living expenses.

A number of participants were also motivated to teach in Egypt for family reasons. For example, some participants came with their partner who was also a teacher and Egypt offered positions for both of them. One participant reported that he and his partner felt Egypt was a better place to raise their children. Another participant indicated that he and his partner liked that that their child could begin preschool earlier

than if they were in Canada. It is interesting to note that this participant agreed having a nursery at the school where their child could be taken care of was an important recruitment and retention tool, which will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, several participants reported that they came to Egypt because their family or friends were already there. For example, one participant stated, “Both of us had retired from our own jobs in [Canada] and friends of ours actually work here at the time, so when we found out, we applied to the school and came.”

Motivations to Stay

There were a number of themes that emerged when participants described potential reasons for staying in Egypt. These centered primarily on the school environment, employment potential and family reasons.

With respect to the workplace environment, some participants felt that staying in Egypt provided opportunities for career development and growth. For example, some argued that they were gaining immediate experience with Canadian curriculum, which would continue to grow if they stayed in Egypt.

What I like about [this school] is it teaches [Canadian] curriculum, which means when I go home, I will have four years of [Canadian] curriculum under my belt. When I go back to hopefully teach at home one day, I will have relevant experience with the curriculum I am teaching and I will be able to slide into teaching in Canada again. So that is one reason for me to stay.”

While some participants described work demands as high, some participants described how the work demands were reduced through the help of assistants who

played a much more significant role than teaching assistants in Canada. For example, “Every year I’ve been overseas we’ve had assistance for kindergarten and grade one from teaching assistants...we’ve learned that their role here is to be just like the teachers...so this has been very helpful.”

Some participants also indicated they were comfortable with the teaching environment and the high quality of the schools, as well as the career challenge the schools afforded. “I’ve been here from the start so I’ve come and I’ve stayed. I’ve seen it as a challenge at the twilight of my career that is unique, gratifying.”

Participants also cited that Egypt offered greater employment potential during the current economic climate. One participant stated, “[In Canada] you would be a teacher on call for years and years, and here you can be a full-time teacher.” This raises an interesting retention issue, because although participants acknowledged the difficulty in gaining employment in Canada, the turnover rate in international schools remains high.

While only a couple of participants indicated that they were staying in Egypt for financial benefits which included a lower cost of living, some participants did indicate that an increase in financial incentives could be a reason to stay.

The majority of those who were going to be staying on in Egypt reported that they had some sort of family/relationship connection. In other words, they were in a relationship with an Egyptian. In one case, a participant had returned to teach in Egypt for relationship reasons. This participant stated, “I knew I wanted to come back because I was coming back for love. I had met someone here, so I came back for a purpose.”

Motivations to Leave

Participants reported a number of reasons they would want to leave Egypt. Motivations to leave were categorized into four areas: the school environment, economic reasons, cultural reasons and family reasons.

With respect to the school environment, several participants reported that motivations to leave were related to the dynamic nature of international schools. In particular, some were waiting for information about changes in school administration before making decisions to stay or leave. Another participant expressed the challenges associated with sharing resources with other teachers (e.g., textbooks); teaching in small classrooms; and the reorganization of classroom composition with the addition of new students. One participant also found it difficult to cover the curriculum due to a truncated timetable that resulted from other curriculum requirements (e.g., language classes) and school closures at the time of the swine flu outbreak.

Participants also attributed a few cultural reasons for leaving. These reasons included cultural differences faced by female teachers in particular; language barriers; and differences in the way things are organized. For example, one participant stated, "...I would stay in this culture for a couple of years to explore it. Compared to Canada where I have political rights and freedoms, this is not going to be equal." Another stated the desire to leave in order to continue exploring other cultures. This participant stated, "...after 2 years, even if I'm not going home I'll probably go to explore another country just to experience whether its good or bad, if I'm growing as a person and becoming a better teacher because of it. So eventually I do want to go home because home is

home and...I realize the more I travel how lucky I am to be in the society that I am from.”

Employment potential was another factor which contributed to expat teachers' decisions to leave. A number of participants reported concerns related to their ability to obtain employment in Canada if they remained in Egypt. For example, one participant reported that Canadian employers will not consider applicants from outside the country. Others felt that they could not keep up to changes occurring back in Canada. One participant stated, "...from my experience, it has been a pleasure and I love to teach here. I really enjoyed my time and I'm sad to go but I need to. I need to get into and work the job force in Canada if I can.”

Financial reasons were also commonly cited as reasons to leave Egypt. Specifically, participants felt their salaries were inadequate. In some cases, they reported that their salaries were lower than that of other international teachers. For example, one participant stated, "I didn't sign on for the money and the amount that I get paid now is not what I would get paid at home because the expenses are different. I think in other international schools around the world the pay is better, so that is the draw for me to go somewhere else.”

Others argued that the cost of living in Egypt had increased, which undoubtedly added further constraints to their perception of income. There was also some concern about an increase in taxes. Related to financial reasons, two participants also cited concerns over the absence of a pension plan and concerns about future financial security in this regard.

A number of participants also indicated that they or their colleagues were returning to Canada for family reasons. Some indicated they felt pressured by their family to return home. Others stated they wanted to establish a family in Canada, or raise their children there. Finally, some found it too difficult to be so far away from their family in Canada. For example, one participant commented, “a lot of the teachers that left probably left because they had family at home and they’re at a time in their career where they want to establish themselves in BC and have family or they have loved ones that propels them to go home.”

Theme Four: Experiences and Insights

A fourth overarching theme identified in the data analysis includes information and insights from expatriate teachers to enhance teacher sustainability, either through recruitment or retention efforts. While there are similarities between this theme and *motivations to stay*, this theme is distinct in that it captures specific recommendations from teachers about ways to enhance the expatriate teacher recruitment process and to improve teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

This section captures participants’ comments about expatriate teacher sustainability in two ways. First, there are specific recommendations provided by participants when asked directly if they had any recommendations regarding recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Secondly, there are recommendations made through the interpretation of the discourse that took place with participants. Finally, this section closes with a sub-theme capturing comments from participants about the characteristics and qualities of expatriate teachers who are most likely to succeed.

Direct Recommendations

Recruitment Process

In terms of specific recommendations for the recruitment process, participants argued that the process should be accurate. Participants felt that expatriate teachers may not have accurate expectations when they go to Egypt and the recruitment process could be enhanced to screen or clarify those expectations. For example, one participant commented, "...interviews have to become more personalized. I don't think they are hitting enough points. It's not enough that a person is willing to move here. You really have to make them understand and imagine life here".

Many participants discussed the process that they encountered when recruited to teach internationally. Participants experienced recruitment in several ways. For example, some teachers experienced recruitment through a job fair. Some participants underwent an interview process with school senior administrators in Canada or over the phone, while others were recruited through the school boards or friends. Many participants provided details about the specific recruitment incentives that they found to be positive or areas for potential change. These comments are detailed in the following section.

Recruitment Incentives

Participants viewed their recruitment experiences as positive when they were provided with pictures and information about the Egyptian culture and the schools. For example, one participant stated, "We really liked the school and what we had seen at

this school. It is a very aesthetically pleasing and the environment looked like it would be very welcoming and easy to teach in.” Another participant discussed the benefits of screening prior to attending international teaching recruitment fairs, which was described as critical to ensure that graduates thought through the process clearly before applying to go abroad “...at my [teacher training] school, you had to go through a screening process first, even before you were allowed into the job fair. So you had to have strong interest in going abroad and you had to write your philosophy of teaching and reasons why, which I thought was really smart.”

Further, some participants described the benefits of being able to meet with other new recruits they would be working with. For example, one participant stated, “A lot of people were flying [from Canada], so we had a meeting of new staff before we flew out. That gave us some familiar faces to know before we got here and reduced the anxiety level and learning curves. This goes towards making the process a lot more successful for new staff”. Another stated, “I love coming into an environment where we have a lot of young teachers as there are lot of people we can relate to on a social level as well outside of the school. We also knew that there were other families coming so that was definitely a draw.”

Finally, in terms of specific recruitment incentives, participants discussed the quality of the schools and special features such as access to on-site nurseries for their children at a reduced cost. “For us it was the appeal of getting [our child] into school a year early because children can go to school here full-time at the nursery. So that was definitely a selling point for us; knowing that [our child] would have that enrichment.”

Support on Arrival to Egypt

Some participants spoke specifically about the positive aspects of the support they received on arrival to Egypt.

I can remember our second day, going out to get some basic groceries and we couldn't handle it and had to go home. So it's definitely nice that the school provided us with some food. They also provided frequently asked questions and common phrases in an information book as well as a map and phone numbers for restaurants if we wanted to order in. So that made it a nice transition. On top of that, the day after we came in our senior administrators had an opportunity to show us around and share landmarks and where the grocery stores were".

Another participant stated, "Now this school actually did a really good job. They picked us up at the airport. They took us right to our apartments. They walked us around town, they showed us where to get food, they were really, really good."

Several others offered suggestions the schools could put in place to help new teachers adjust. For example, one participant stated, "...something could be set up with new teachers, like a dinner or group gatherings outside the school, so that everybody gets to know each other in an informal setting. Making friends is very important, because if you don't know anybody it's lonely. I think this would help new teachers out socially." This idea relates directly back to the importance of building relationships detailed within the first theme.

Recommendations Captured Through Discourse

Retention Strategies

With respect to retention strategies, many participants' comments focused on the benefits of building a community within the workplace and the importance of establishing mentoring relationships. These ideas were captured in the first theme discussed, *building relationships within the schools*, and have direct ties back to workplace health, with particular reference to the significance of establishing workplace communities and collegial support. Other participant comments related more specifically to the financial compensation expatriate teachers receive, which is detailed in the section below.

Compensation and Benefits

Although participants were not directly asked to discuss compensation and benefits, some commented on these issues during the conversations that took place at the time of the interviews. For the most part, participants focused on issues of salary and commented that it was too low and in not comparable to teacher's salaries at other international schools. For example, one participant stated, "We have enjoyed our year, but the salary doesn't really meet the cost of living, which has increased quite a bit in the last few years in Egypt. We didn't really have the ability to save as much as we could have, so the salary came up as one factor that influenced our decision [to plan to leave]".

Other participants commented that they would stay in Egypt if they had the opportunity to live there with the same benefits as they do in Canada. One participant stated, "...right now we are not paying into a pension plan. At our age, we are thinking

we need to make sure we are putting money into a pension plan. Plus, if for some reason we decided to have a child, we wouldn't be able to claim paternity or maternity leave, so that is definitely a factor for us.”

Finally, some argued that enhanced salary would improve retention which would be of benefit to the schools and students overall by reducing the turnover of teachers. “...the more money, the more teachers that stay, the better the schools would be. It's good for the school and for the classroom community.”

Who Will Succeed?

This theme was developed from participant comments about issues and recommendations that pertain to personal attributes or characteristics associated with expatriate teacher recruitment and retention. This theme centers on the qualities of expatriate teachers most likely to succeed in international teaching environments, from the perspectives of participants. These qualities include adequate preparation, the ability and time to accept and adapt to a new culture, flexibility and the ability to build relationships within and outside of the schools.

Adequate Preparation

The importance of preparation is demonstrated by comments about the recruitment process described above. Beyond specific recruitment incentives, many participants commented that preparedness was important to expatriate teacher sustainability. For example, one participant stated, “as far as retention of people, something has to happen in you that makes you want to stay. We've had teachers leave

early for various reasons. I'm not sure how well thought out the decision was before coming. It's difficult, because I know what to expect, but for others, I think it comes down to lack of preparedness."

The importance of adequate preparation to a successful experience was demonstrated by other participant who stated:

I find this year especially that the majority of people hired, are suffering. They had different expectations. They thought it would be easier. They were just going to travel and the teaching load would be light here. I don't know whether this is what they were told in the interview or whether these were the ideas that they had conjured up, because no one gave them a clear picture.

Acceptance of a New Culture

Throughout the interviews, most participants touched on the importance of the ability to accept that things will not be the same in Egypt as compared to Canada. This was described as critical to the successful adaptation into a new school and a new culture.

...you have to have a nature of accepting that you are a guest to this country and that there are things that just don't work the same the way here as they do in Canada. You have to respect the differences and you have to be a person who can accept new cultures value systems. [You need to] keep an open mind and an open eye to what goes on in a different country. I think these are necessary

personality characteristics of somebody who is coming to work in international setting.

You can't come here and expect to live the same way you did at home. If you are going to come with tunnel vision my best advice would be don't come. You really have to come with an open mind and if you are coming as a family you both have to be able to come with an open mind, because it is very different. Realistically any culture in the world is going to be different than Canada and the way we are used to living.

Several other participants commented that expatriate teachers need to accept the differences between Canada and Egypt to adapt and thrive. "Often people try to compare to Canada in terms of how things happen or what they do and do not have. I think if you allow these differences to become major issues, then you will never be satisfied." Another participant stated, "I find that teachers that don't survive are the ones that can't let go. They have to understand that they are coming to a third world country. You can't fix that. You can try, but you can't. You have to accept it and a lot of people have problems doing that."

Adequate Time Required to Adjust

Another issue that was raised during the interviews was the importance of taking time to adapt to the new culture. One participant stated,

Once you get over the hump then it's different. Adjusting took me two months but for some people it takes a whole year. A friend of mine lived here for two and

a half years before she really liked it and now she is here for a fourth year. It varies for everybody, some people tough it out and some people can't and they just go home."

Flexibility

During the interviews, many participants explained that adapting to a new culture requires flexibility.

I find that I take things in a different perspective. If there is an issue, I try to find a way to get around it or see if there is another way of doing it, or I'm more understanding as to why the issue is arising, and I don't focus on it. Talking to any expatriate teacher, every school has its issues and they are different. I think it depends on the individual and how much they can handle and what kinds of things do they need. I have been able to overcome it but we are losing a lot of teachers. This is the nature of, of international schools. There's a lot of turn over from either people just decide to go home. Or they don't like the way the school is running, so they take their chances somewhere else. Some people just can't handle the country. Others, like myself, really try to understand why things are the way they are and don't dwell on them.

Another participant stated, "I can make do with what I have. I've learned how to just make it up on the fly, you know."

Building Relationships

This section ties directly back to the overarching theme, *building relationships within the schools*, and further highlights the significance of building relationships to the successful integration and sustainability of expatriate teachers. Most participants interviewed in this study brought up comments related to building relationships, and some did so in defining qualities required to succeed as an expatriate teacher.

For example, one participant stated, “some people come here and they don’t develop the kind of relationships that they’re really going to rely on for the rest of the year. You are friends with your colleagues, but finding people outside of school that are your foundation is important.” Another stated, “...on a day to day small scale things, it’s all about you and how are you treating others and how are you working with others and what kind of attitudes that your displaying.”

In summary, the results of this study demonstrate that factors associated with expatriate teacher sustainability at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt are associated with four key themes that integrate elements of workplace health. Building relationships within the schools, building relationships beyond the schools, a sense of the temporary, and the experiences and insights of expatriate teachers, touch on aspects of workplace health that will be explicitly discussed in relation to the thesis questions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through the lens of workplace health, this study explored issues related to expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. The data reported in the previous chapter uncover a number of factors that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability, specific to both the cultural context of Egypt and to the nature of teaching internationally. While the focus on retention clearly ties back to workplace health, many comments were also raised about personal factors and the critical role of external life relationships to expatriate teacher adjustment and sustainability.

Underpinning this study were a number of research questions. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the data presented in the previous chapter in order to address the research questions and to offer recommendations on measures to enhance expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. This Chapter will close with an outline of the limitations of this study, recommendations for future research and final conclusions.

Question 1a: Does School Organizational Health Contribute to Expatriate Teacher Sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?

In this study, many qualities and practices that contribute to school organizational health were revealed in the themes that emerged from the data. In many cases, these qualities and practices were described by participants as features associated with the workplace environment that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

Specifically, supportive relationships with administrators and colleagues, the opportunity for career development and growth, job challenge, work demands and compensation and benefits were among the issues described by participants as important when considering whether to remain teaching at Canadian Offshore schools in Egypt. The workplace health qualities and practices described by teachers in this study are consistent with many factors found to influence expatriate teachers' motivations to join and remain teaching at international schools (Hardman, 2001). In addition, the findings support research on teacher turnover, which indicates that teacher salary, support from administrators and autonomy are among the predictors of teacher turnover in American schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

Supportive Relationships

Social support is a strong correlate of a healthy work environment (Lowe & Schellenberg, 2003) and work climate (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004). In this study, expatriate teachers discussed that developing relationships provides collegial support within the schools as well as within teaching practice. These relationships were described by participants as central to a sense of community in the schools, which is an essential dimension of a healthy school climate (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, Pickeral, 2009) and the success of schools (Durkheim, 1961; Waller, 1932; Parsons, 1959; Grant, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Kirst, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989, as cited in Ingersoll, 2001). Further, within the context of an international environment, given the required adjustments to a new culture, language and living circumstances, support within the schools becomes even more important

(Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Participants commented that in some circumstances, steps were recommended or underway toward the development of workplace communities. In other circumstances, participants reported that supportive communities were already established and went on to discuss how beneficial they were.

Comments from teachers participating in this study revealed that supportive relationships within the international teaching environment are important to the success and sustainability of expatriate teachers and Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt for a number of reasons. First, leadership support emerged, which is an important quality of healthy schools (Hoy, 1990) and a key factor associated with the retention of teachers in American schools (Ingersoll, 2001) and internationally (Odland and Ruzicka, 2009). Participants commented about the importance of backup and support from senior administrators, especially as new teachers in a new country. This could indicate that expatriate teachers new to international settings require additional support until they become accustomed to the differences.

Similar to prior research which links the social domain of the workplace to efficiency and organizational effectiveness (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004), it was found in this study that building supportive relationships within the schools was important to the interpersonal aspects of work. Participants described that building supportive relationships with school staff enables expatriate teachers to navigate differences in the inner-workings of the schools. In fact, within a culturally diverse workplace, supportive relationships are critical to success (Walton, cited in Joslin, 2002). While participants described this as important, It should be noted that

success in building these relationships may be contingent upon expatriate teachers' desire and willingness to do so.

Expatriate teachers also discussed that collegial support derives from communities of practice. Participants stressed the importance of modeling and mentorship from teachers who have been teaching in Egypt for a number of years. For example, they noted that experienced teachers understand the energetic nature and nuances of the students and have developed successful teaching styles and techniques that are useful to model and share. In some cases, mentorship was seen as more critical to the success of expatriate teachers than formal professional development opportunities, especially in the case of teachers new to international schools. This is important to note given that lack of peer support and mentorship are among the reasons why three quarters of teachers in American schools leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Finally, some participants spoke specifically about the high rate of teacher turnover within the international teaching profession and how it impacts supportive relationships. In particular, they highlighted the ways in which teacher turnover can impact the schools. For example, some indicated it makes it difficult to establish school spirit and a school community; essential features of healthy schools (Hoy, 1990). Others indicated that in the case of high turnover, there may be a shortage of senior teachers who can provide mentorship and guidance to new teachers. This may compromise the development of new teachers who could later fill mentorship roles to other teachers.

In summary, teachers provided many examples to demonstrate the role and importance of supportive relationships in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt in discussions about leadership support, supportive relationships within the schools and collegial support. This may provide important information to enhance strategies already underway within the schools to build and sustain supportive relationships and communities of practice. However, as noted, there are a number of challenges that exist. For example, while the absence of collegial and leadership support has been found to contribute to teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2003), a high level of turnover within the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt may prevent the continuity and stability required within the schools to build supportive relationships, communities of practice, and indeed, the type of healthy workplace culture that supports expatriate teacher retention. Participants did, however, express a clear desire to establish or grow existing workplace communities. While there is an opportunity for Canadian Offshore Schools to build upon networks and collaborations amongst teachers within the schools, given the challenges associated with sustaining supportive relationships as described, the schools may wish to consider the expansion of communities of practice between Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt and perhaps with Canadian Offshore schools in other countries. If, as Ingersoll's (2003) research supports, teacher shortage has more to do with the organizational conditions and environment of the schools than a lack of supply of teachers, perhaps organizational support could be enhanced by developing a network of expatriate teachers across many countries. A global community of practice may help to mitigate the challenges associated with teacher continuity at the school level and could possibly provide alternative means of supportive networks to build the

capacity and experience of expatriate teachers for the duration of their international tenure.

Career Development and Growth

The opportunity to learn and advance in one's work is a key element of a healthy workplace (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson and McGrath, 2004). In fact, professional advancement was the most frequently reported reason for teachers joining and remaining teaching at international schools (Hardman, 2001) and has also been associated with teacher turnover in American schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

In this study, career development and growth were described by participants as important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Egypt. While some teachers reported that staying in Egypt provided opportunities for career development and growth through immediate experience with the Canadian curriculum, others felt they may lose out on knowledge and skills development that would contribute to their marketability in Canada.

The information provided by expatriate teachers in this study presents several opportunities for Canadian Offshore Schools. First, the data supports that professional development through mentorship is very important to expatriate teachers and can be provided locally as described earlier. Secondly, providing more opportunities for professional development may alleviate teachers concerns by ensuring teachers' marketability is retained. Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt may wish to consider the provision of a sabbatical to enable expatriate teachers to return to Canada to teach, followed by a return to Egypt to teach for an agreed upon timeframe. This would allow

for the establishment of more experienced teachers in Egypt, while enabling the flexibility some teachers may desire. Finally, more formalized opportunities to advance expatriate teachers within their careers could be provided, such as the development of teaching head or master mentor roles within the schools.

Job Challenges and Work Demands

Among the features of a healthy workplace, workload, control, autonomy and role clarity presented in this study as motives to join or remain teaching at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

Autonomy is described as the freedom to schedule and conduct work with a reasonable amount of independence and discretion (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson and McGrath, 2004). Its absence is an important predictor of teacher turnover in American Schools (Ingersoll, 2004). Participants in this study described that they experience a great deal of autonomy in their classrooms. This came in the form of being trusted to run the classroom as they felt appropriate, and being able to develop new courses and programs within the school. Participants also described a sense of control and challenge in that despite being newly graduated teachers they were allowed to have their own classrooms. For example, this was described in contrast to the Canadian experience of having to start out as a teacher on call. A sense of clarity regarding teaching positions was also raised in understanding the goals and overall vision of the school. These elements described by participants are qualities of a healthy work environment (Lowe, 2004).

Also within the concept of job design, teachers discussed positive and negative aspects of their work demands, which is an important correlate of a healthy work environment (Lowe & Schellenberg, 2003). Several participants identified that they have greater work demands in terms of dealing with the high energy level of the students. Further, some participants indicated that work demands were high due to the limited resources (e.g., textbooks), which is a key aspect of the organizational health of schools at the managerial level (Hoy, 1990). In addition, several participants also found it difficult to cover the curriculum due to a truncated timetable that resulted from other curriculum requirements (e.g., language classes) and the swine flu interruption. In contrast, however, some participants described that their work demands were significantly reduced with the support of assistants. They commented that assistants played a much more significant role in Egypt as compared to Canada, which ties back to the comments teachers made about the importance of supportive relationships within the schools.

In summary, when teachers discussed factors associated with their decisions to remain teaching at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt, job challenges and workload arose. Participants' comments reinforced that very positive aspects exist within the schools that contribute to a healthy workplace environment, such as the level of autonomy and trust imparted to teachers to run their classrooms. In some cases, participant comments also revealed that there are opportunities for improvement associated with resource support and class scheduling.

Compensation and Benefits

Adequate compensation is one of many aspects of a healthy work organization (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson and McGrath, 2004), and is factor associated with expatriate teacher turnover in international schools (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). While a few participants discussed the specific compensation and benefits they were receiving, it should be noted that participants were not asked to disclose this information, which may account for why it did not come up in the discussion. For the most part, participants focused on issues of salary and that it was too low and in not on par with other schools. While only a couple of participants indicated that they were staying for financial benefits from reduced living expenses, some participants did indicate that an increase in financial incentives could be a reason to stay. These participant's views are in support of Hardman's findings which indicate that compensation is a strong factor associated with expatriate teachers' decisions to remain at or leave an international school (2001).

It is important to note that the data revealed that certain incentives and benefits are important to expatriate teacher sustainability. Participants discussed the benefits of access to discounted on-site nursery care, financial support for accommodation rentals the provision of transportation between home and schools, and financial compensation for annual trips between Egypt and Canada. In contrast, the absence of maternity or paternity leave and pension plans was described as reasons to consider leaving the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

Although participants stated they found it difficult to obtain full time employment in Canada, the turnover rate in international schools remains high. Some participants

indicated an increase in financial incentives and benefits could be a reason to stay. Thus, an opportunity exists for Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt to consider the cost-benefit analysis of providing salary and benefit increases to improve the continuity of expatriate teachers' tenure and the overall sustainability of the schools.

Question 1b. What Other Factors are Important to Expatriate Teacher Sustainability
in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?

External Life Relationships

The host nation's culture is one of the many cultural influences described to influence teachers' success within an international environment (Joslin, 2002). In this study, building relationships outside the school was discussed by participants as a factor associated with expatriate teacher sustainability within Egypt and within international environments. In other words, participants stated that it was important for expatriate teachers to develop relationships with people other than their immediate colleagues. In particular, participants identified that building such relationships has important benefits of exposure to the Egyptian culture that might not otherwise be gained if they only interact with other expatriate teachers from Canada. It also serves as a means of establishing roots within Egypt and helps to prevent a sense of isolation.

Without question, the issue of integration into a new culture as it relates to expatriate teacher retention is an important but minimally researched area. The findings from this study indicate that cultural influences may be closely tied with personal

reasons associated with staying or leaving Canadian Offshore Schools, which are described in the next section.

Personal Factors

While a high degree of emphasis will always be placed on the personal circumstances associated with teachers' decisions to remain at or leave their schools (Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001), personal circumstances have been demonstrated as a causal factor associated with teacher turnover in international schools (Odland & Ruzicka, 2006). In this study, the majority of those teachers who were going to be staying on in Egypt and at their schools reported that they had some sort of family/relationship connection in Egypt. This raises an interesting point in the pull of the workplace versus the pull of life outside of the workplace. In an international setting, the workplace and external life may become one and the same, unless those external relationships are formed. If the workplace is experienced to be the same for all participants, the difference between those staying and leaving could be attributed to the external-life features. Perhaps people stay despite challenges in the workplace if they've established roots in their lives outside of the workplace.

In addition to family and relationships, other personal factors associated with social and cultural adaptation were described by participants as important to expatriate teacher sustainability. These qualities centered on the ability to adapt to a new culture, allowing adequate time to adjust, the ability to build relationships within the Egyptian community and the ability to exercise flexibility in finding solutions. Participants' comments about the personal qualities required for successful adaptation share

similarities with the desired qualities of international teachers described by Joslin (2002), which include mental flexibility, sensitivity to different cultures and emotional balance.

A final observation from the data was the emergence of a common thread that most participants made reference to. This was developed into a third overarching theme, entitled “*a sense of the temporary*” which underpinned many participants’ motivations to teach internationally and the thoughts they shared about staying. In other words, many of the expatriate teachers interviewed did not view their tenure in Egypt or as international teachers as permanent. This is an important consideration that may provide insight to the challenge of expatriate teacher retention in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. With the recognition that many expatriate teachers view their teaching tenure in Egypt as temporary, more rigorous screening could be implemented during the recruitment phase to ensure that only those applicants who are fully prepared to teach internationally and understand the implications of their decision are recruited. This may improve retention of teachers within the two year contract timeframe and beyond.

In summary, participants in this study discussed factors that are important expatriate teacher retention. These factors include qualities of school organizational health and healthy workplace practices, but also extend to building relationships beyond the schools and personal factors.

Question 2a. What are the Most Important Factors Associated with Expatriate Teachers' Professional Decisions to Stay at or Leave the Schools?

In this study, teachers' most important considerations to stay or leave Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt closely reflected findings in the literature. Features of the workplace environment, the current economic climate, the local culture, compensation and benefits and personal reasons emerged as important to participants' motivations to leave or remain teaching at the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt.

As discussed previously, the majority of those interviewed who were going to be remaining in Egypt reported that they had a family or relationship connection. This suggests that establishing relationships beyond the schools may be important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Egypt.

From a workplace health perspective, teachers described that there were a number of factors associated with their desire to stay. These included the benefits of having their own classrooms; classroom assistants; and a comfortable teaching environment within high quality schools. A final factor described by participants as important was job challenge, which was found to be a top factor associated with teacher retention in international schools (Hardman, 2001).

Other factors associated with the desire to stay were described by expatriate teachers as a lower cost of living and better employment potential in Egypt as compared to schools in Canada which afforded immediate experience teaching.

Personal decisions to leave were described by participants as influenced by the dynamic nature of the schools and associated levels of expatriate teacher turnover.

This can affect the development of school community cohesion, relationships and effectiveness (Bryk, Lee & Smith, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001a, cited in Elfers, Plecki & Knapp, 2006). In a few cases, resource issues (i.e. textbooks) were also raised. Other reasons to leave were associated with cultural and language differences, the desire for teaching experience in Canada and pressure from family to return to Canada. Consistent with the expatriate and teacher turnover literature, the final reason leave was associated with levels compensation (Ingersoll, 2001, Odland & Ruzicka, 2006), that was described as insufficient by many participants.

Question 2b. What do Expatriate Teachers Recommend to Help Promote Teacher Sustainability at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt?

Key recommendations shared by participants to promote expatriate teacher sustainability at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt centered on the recruitment process, support to build relationships within and outside of the schools and financial incentives and benefits.

Garton (2001) argues that the recruitment process is the most important role of international school leadership. In this study, many participants discussed the importance of the recruitment process to expatriate teacher sustainability, which supports the findings of existing expatriate teacher turnover literature (Odland & Ruzicka 2009). While many participants reported very positive recruitment experiences, others commented that insufficient rigor in the recruitment process could be a reason for colleagues leaving early and recommended that the process could be improved to more accurately reflect what to expect when teaching abroad. It's important to note that there

was also some suggestion that personal attributes such as patience and understanding cultural differences may facilitate the expatriate teachers' successful adaptation to an international school and environment. Canadian Offshore Schools may wish to investigate the viability of intercultural awareness screening or training as an additional measure toward expatriate teacher sustainability.

As discussed previously, supportive relationships are a critical dimension of a healthy workplace environment (Lowe & Schellenberg, 2003) and healthy school climate (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, Pickeral, 2009), and to the ultimate success of schools (Durkheim, 1961; Waller, 1932; Parsons, 1959; Grant, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Kirst, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989, as cited in Ingersoll, 2001). Recommendations from participants to improve expatriate teacher sustainability also centered on the role of schools and leadership in helping expatriate teachers develop supportive relationships within and beyond the schools. These supportive relationships were seen as important to setting into a foreign country and to building supportive networks and communities of practice.

Finally, a third group of recommendations centered on the suggestion to increase financial incentives and benefits in order to retain expatriate teachers. It is interesting to note that some participants expressed the desire to stay in Egypt if the benefits were comparable to Canada. It was suggested that in addition to the existing benefits teachers receive which include access and reduced rates to on-site nurseries, financial support for apartment rentals and flights to Canada; the addition of salary increases, compensation to support maternity/paternity leaves, and pension plans would increase expatriate teacher retention in Egypt.

In summary, due to the exploratory nature of this study, further research is necessary before explicit conclusions can be made about the factors that influence expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. However, the data from this study reveals that elements associated with workplace health are considered by expatriate teachers when making decisions about staying or leaving Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. In addition to factors associated with the workplace environment, two other areas emerged as important to expatriate teacher sustainability. These include external life relationships and personal factors. Recommendations to enhance recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt were captured and described across all areas.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations associated with this study that primarily derive from the nature of this study. First, the qualitative methodology of data collection and analysis was subject to the skill and bias of the researcher. Inductive thematic analysis was discussed with the supervisor to ensure consistency and perspective; however, multiple perspectives from other researchers, a panel of experts or the participants of this study was not obtained. Secondly, given the nature of this study, this research shifted from a mixed-methods study design to a qualitative design, due to lack of survey respondents. However, the change did not affect the choice or integrity of the qualitative portion of the study.

Finally, data gathered in this study is subject to participant's subjective opinions and views. It was assumed that participants would respond to the questions asked

without preconceived biases, thus the study is limited by teacher honesty in response to the interview questions. In addition, this study doesn't take into account factors associated with teacher turnover such as age, gender, length of teaching tenure and subject specialty.

Future Research

Given the exploratory nature of this study, further research is recommended to determine the factors associated with expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools.

First, information reported in this study is limited to Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Expanding the scope beyond Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt to include the study of Canadian Offshore Schools in other countries would enable comparison between countries and possibly the establishment of findings that can be generalized to the expatriate teaching community as a whole.

Secondly, while participants stated that elements associated with workplace health were important to their decisions to stay or leave, external life relationships and personal factors were also described as important to expatriate teacher sustainability at Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Future research could be undertaken to better understand the role of workplace health in expatriate teacher retention in relation to external-life features and personal factors. For example, social capital theory may provide a framework to understand the role of supportive relationships in expatriate teacher adjustment and sustainability. Further research could also be directed toward personal factors such as intercultural awareness, length of time required to adjust, and the impact of established causal factors (for example, length of teaching experience) on

expatriate teacher retention, which could help guide administrative policy associated with contract length, screening for recruitment and training requirements.

Thirdly, as leadership support emerged as important to expatriate teacher sustainability, future work could focus on the specific needs of teachers with respect to leadership. A fourth related area could examine the impact of teacher turnover in international schools on student achievement in those schools.

Finally, given that many motivations to teach in Egypt derived from lack of teaching jobs in Canada, future research could be undertaken to consider the role of economic drivers in expatriate teacher retention and mobility.

Conclusions

It has become increasingly important for employers to understand and respond to the challenges surrounding employee engagement and retention, given the extent of global mobility within the workforce and the competition to attract and retain top talent. The changing nature of work and employment practices compels leaders to develop a workplace environment that is healthy and supportive; a workplace where employees want to be (Chu & Dwyer, 2002).

Much research has focused on the antecedents and outcomes of healthy workplaces. In the education sector, many studies examine teacher turnover, however, only a few studies were found that examine expatriate teacher turnover in international schools. While these studies contemplate the workplace environment, they do not consider expatriate teacher turnover from a workplace health perspective. Hence, my primary objective in conducting this study was to understand whether workplace health

plays a role in expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools, from the perspectives of expatriate teachers. Egypt was the country of choice to conduct this research since in-person access to the schools and study participants were permitted and facilitated by the schools.

Given the cultural context of the schools in Egypt and the existing literature on international teacher turnover, it was also important to be receptive to factors outside the workplace environment that may be associated with expatriate teacher sustainability. This compelled the development of a secondary research question which was aimed to capture comments from participants about other factors that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability in Egypt.

Finally, with an aim to provide practical recommendations for workplace practice and policy, two additional research questions were formed to gather insights from participants about the reasons behind expatriate teachers' decisions to stay or leave, and practical recommendations to help promote teacher sustainability, generated by expatriate teachers first-hand experience of working in the schools and living in Egypt.

In this study, I explored expatriate teacher sustainability by interviewing eleven teachers at the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Study participants voiced many issues they felt were important to expatriate teacher retention at the Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt, and workplace health was among them. Workplace health manifested in supportive relationships with leadership and colleagues, opportunity for career development and growth, job challenge, work demands and compensation and benefits. These features were seen by expatriate teachers as important to their motivations to come, stay and leave Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt and were also

discussed in the context of their recommendations to enhance expatriate teacher retention.

Other factors described by expatriate teachers as important to their decisions to stay or leave the schools was evident in discussions about the importance of relationships beyond the schools and issues and motivations that were personally-derived. In fact, motivators to stay that were external to the workplace in some cases overshadowed influencing factors within the workplace. In other words, personal circumstances such as relationships or family in Egypt resulted in teachers staying, regardless of employment circumstances.

Finally, there are a number of implications from this study to support expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. While the majority of participants supported the high quality, standards and support provided by the schools, specific recommendations were provided by participants based on first-hand experiences. These included suggestions to ensure a rigorous and accurate recruitment process; support from the schools in building relationships within and outside of the schools and consideration to enhance current levels of financial incentives and benefits. In addition, through the discourse it was apparent that supportive relationships with administrators and colleagues is critical to support new teachers; to help build communities of practice for mentorship and peer support; and to provide opportunities for career development and growth.

In summary, this study provided a new way to think about expatriate teacher turnover from a workplace health perspective. In doing so, it has shed light on the complexity of expatriate teacher sustainability, captured in teachers' comments about

the school environment, the cultural contexts of the schools and the Egyptian culture in which the schools reside. Together, these factors shaped participants' decisions about whether to remain teaching within Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt. Thus, the findings of this study provides potential areas of strategic focus and further research to understand and enhance expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian Offshore Schools.

From a personal perspective, my experience throughout this study was one of growth and reflection. As an organizational health and sustainability professional, my experience has been grounded in the higher education sector. Working with expatriate teachers in Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt has broadened my appreciation for the teaching profession as a whole and has created a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with teacher sustainability in international environments, given the complexity of employee mobility in the 21st century. I truly hope that this study will make a meaningful contribution to the literature and will prompt further research to better understand issues associated with teacher retention in international schools and the role of workplace health in supporting teacher sustainability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey



School Organizational Health and Teacher Sustainability

CANADIAN OFFSHORE SCHOOLS

SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS AND CONSENT:

Please read carefully.

By completing this survey, you are providing your informed consent to participate in the survey portion of this research project.

This research project is a pilot study being undertaken as a thesis toward a Master of Arts in Education at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. The Graduate Student is Leanne Bilodeau and the Principal/Thesis Supervisor is Dr. Robert Campbell, Dean of Education, UBC Okanagan.

This survey is designed to gather information about the factors that influence expatriate teacher sustainability in Canadian International/Offshore Schools in rapidly developing countries.

You will be asked to respond to questions about your school environment and other factors related to the local environment and living abroad that may contribute to your desire to stay working at an international school. The survey will take 7 – 10 minutes to complete.

The universal username and password you entered to complete this survey ensures that your identity is *anonymous and confidential*. Your survey responses cannot be used to identify you. Survey responses will be stored and reported at an aggregate level. The survey itself resides on an encrypted server in Sydney, British Columbia. Your response to the survey will be reported in aggregate data and stored at a password protection location on UBC's secure server prior to being transferred to the graduate student's password protected UBC Okanagan hard drive in the graduate student's locked office on campus, in accordance with BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). The data will be used for the purposes of informing this research.

Your completion of this survey is *voluntary*. You do not have to respond to any question they do not feel comfortable answering. If you decide to stop, your responses you provided will not be used by the researcher.

There are no known or anticipated risks to expatriate teachers as participants in this study.

Thank you for your time and participation!

SECTION 1: In this section you are asked to indicate the degree of importance of each item in influencing a teacher's desire to stay working abroad

Questions in this section are responded to on a 5 point scale ranging from "not important" to "extremely important".

1. positive school working environment
2. financial incentives
3. programs to help new teachers integrate into the school and local community
4. programs to help spouses and families integrate into the community
5. The high caliber of students I teach here
6. Reasonable cost of living
7. Opportunity to travel to other countries
8. Opportunity experience the local culture
9. A positive local economic climate
10. Opportunities for professional development
11. Opportunities for professional advancement in the school
12. High ideals and values of staff
13. Strong staff involvement in extracurricular activities
14. Strong sense of job challenge
15. High quality staff, students and parents
16. High prestige of school
17. Strong sense of community with my colleagues within the school
18. Good relationships between administration and staff
19. Recognition for my contributions to the school
20. A clear understanding of my role and how it connects to the goals of the school
21. Alignment between my teaching philosophy and the teaching philosophy of this school

SECTION 2: In this section you are asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with certain aspects of your school environment.

Questions in this section are responded to on a 5 point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Organizational health themes are listed in each section for your information, but will be removed on the actual questionnaire.

1. There is good communication between staff members in this school
2. I receive support from my colleagues
3. Teachers in this school can rely on their colleagues for assistance when needed
4. Teachers frequently discuss and share teaching methods and strategies with each other
5. I am encouraged in my work by praise, thanks or other forms of recognition
6. Colleagues recognize one another's achievements and successes
7. I go out of my way to give positive feedback to my colleagues when they deserve it
8. Intrinsic rewards are as valuable to me as extrinsic awards
9. I am clear about my professional responsibilities

10. I understand how my day-to-day work connects to the overall goals of this school
11. There is a clear sense of vision and mission at this school
12. There is agreement in theory and practice in the teaching philosophy of this school
13. The staff are committed to the school's goals
14. My teaching philosophy is in agreement with the teaching philosophy of this school
15. Teachers go about their work with enthusiasm
16. The workplace atmosphere at this school is generally positive
17. There is a good sense of professional collegiality in this school
18. Lines of communication are open between teachers and administrators
19. The professional development planning in the school takes into account my individual needs and interests
20. There is adequate professional development opportunities in this school
21. Opportunities for career advancement are available in this school
22. I regard my colleagues at this school also as friends
23. I feel like part of the local community where I live and work
24. I feel that I am fulfilling my personal goals as a teacher in this school
25. I feel that my work and contributions are valued by this school

SECTION 3: In this section you are asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement with respect to the school you are currently working at.

Questions in this section are responded to on a 5 point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Questions measure teacher commitment.

1. I am willing to put in effort beyond what is normally expected in order to help this school be successful
2. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this school
3. My values are very similar to this school's values
4. I am proud to tell others that I am employed at this school
5. I could just as well be working for a different school as long as the type of work were similar
6. This school inspires me to perform my very best in my job
7. I do not have a strong commitment to employment at this particular school.
8. I am extremely glad decided to work at this school rather than others I was considering.
9. I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school.

SECTION 4: In this section you are asked to provide information about your experience teaching at an international school

1. How many total years of teaching experience do you have?
_____ years
2. Which school do you currently teach at?
(drop down forced-choice menu)
3. Have you been teaching at this school for greater than or equal to 1 year?
Yes – skip to question 5
No

4. (If No) How many months have you been working at this school?
_____ months
5. (If Yes) How many year(s) have you been working at this school?
_____ year(s)
6. Do you have any teaching experience at international schools prior to your current job?
Yes – skip to question 7
No
7. If yes, how many years of prior teaching experience have been at international schools?
_____ years
In what country (ies)? _____
8. Have you ever extended your contract in any one international school beyond the original agreement?

Yes – skip to question 10

No
9. If no, why? _____
10. If yes, why? _____
11. If it were your personal choice, how likely is it that you will leave this school in the next year (i.e. resign or request transfer)?

Very likely

Unlikely

Why? _____

SECTION 5: In this section you are asked to provide your comments and recommendations.

1. Please list the top 3 reasons why expatriate teachers would want to stay working at an international/offshore school
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
2. Please describe the top 3 reasons why expatriate teachers would want to leave their job at an international/offshore school

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. What is the best thing about working at an international/offshore school?

4. What is one change you would recommend that would enhance your experience working at an international/offshore school?

SECTION 6: This section asks you to provide some general information about yourself. The information you provide cannot be used to identify you.

1. How old are you? _____ years old
2. What is your sex?
Male
Female
3. What is your relationship status?
Single (never married)
Married/Common Law
Separated/Divorced
Widowed
Other _____
4. Dependents (children) Yes No
5. What is the highest educational qualification you have completed?
Teaching certificate
Teaching/education diploma
Undergraduate degree
Masters degree
PhD
6. Have you received specific teacher training? Y N

Appendix B: Interview Guide



UBC Okanagan Faculty of Education, 3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7

School Organizational Health and Teacher Sustainability:

Canadian Offshore Schools

Teacher Interview Questions/Guidelines

1. How long have you been an expatriate teacher working at a Canadian International Offshore School?
2. What are the main reasons you decided work at a Canadian International Offshore School?
3. What were your expectations? Do you feel those expectations have been met? (note: can shed light on organizational practices or local culture).
4. From your own perspective, what do you think is important for you as a teacher to stay? Possible probes...
 - a. Aspects of the workplace environment
 - b. Aspects of the local environment
5. You have talked about reasons why you would stay, what do you think the reasons are for others? Possible probes...
 - a. Aspects of the workplace environment
 - b. Aspects of the local environment
6. Are there any recommendations you would make to help contribute to expatriate teachers' desire to stay?
7. What have I not asked you that you think is really important for others to know about the expatriate teaching experience?

Appendix C: Principal Script



UBC Okanagan Faculty of Education, 3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7

Invitation to Participate

School Organizational Health and Teacher Sustainability: Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt

Dear Teachers,

Our school will be part of an important study about expatriate teachers working in Canadian International Offshore Schools in Egypt. All expatriate teachers are invited to participate. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

The study is designed to gather information about what's most important to expatriate teachers to stay working abroad, as it relates to the school and local environment. It aims to determine organizational practices and other measures that can support expatriate teacher sustainability based on your feedback, advice and suggestions.

This research project is a study being undertaken as part of the requirement for a thesis toward a Master of Arts in Education at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. The Graduate Student is Leanne Bilodeau and the Principal/Thesis Supervisor is Dr. Robert Campbell, Dean of Education at UBC Okanagan. At the completion of this research, a thesis, showing only aggregate data to ensure that no schools or teachers can be identified, will be produced.

I have attached an "Information Sheet For Expatriate Teachers" provided by the researcher, which provides details about the study for your review.

If you wish to participate in a short survey it is now available on-line at www.surveyfeedback.ca/surveys/wsb.dll/s/1g3f3.

The survey can be accessed and completed anonymously and confidentially through an authentication process, by entering the following universal codes:

Unique ID: **teacher** udfO: **survey**

If you wish to participate in the short teacher interviews, please contact the graduate student at leanne.bilodeau@ubc.ca, who will set up a date and time for your interview and will provide you with an informed consent form for your review and completion. Your name and e-mail address will not be disclosed to anyone other than the graduate student and thesis supervisor and your participation and responses will remain confidential and cannot be used to identify you.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact

Graduate Student: Leanne Bilodeau

Phone 250 860 7625

Mobile 250 317 8746

Email leanne.bilodeau@ubc.ca

Principal Investigator and Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Robert Campbell, Dean of Education, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Phone 250 807-9170

robert.campbell@ubc.ca

Sincerely,

School Principal

Appendix D: Information for Expatriate Teachers



UBC Okanagan Faculty of Education, 3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7

Information for Expatriate Teachers

School Organizational Health and Teacher Sustainability: Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt

What is this study about?

This study is designed to gather the perspectives of expatriate teachers about factors that contribute to their desire to stay working abroad. The aim of this study is to understand how the workplace environment of Canadian International Schools in Egypt and other factors related to the local environment and living abroad may contribute to expatriate teacher experiences and their desire to stay or leave.

Who qualifies as an expatriate teacher?

If you are temporarily or permanently living in a country or culture that is different from that of their upbringing or legal residence, you qualify as an expatriate teacher for the purposes of this study.

Who is conducting this pilot study?

A graduate student from the University of British Columbia, Okanagan is conducting a research study as part of a Masters Thesis for a Master of Arts Degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. Contact information is provided on page 4 of this document.

Who is invited to participate?

Your school is one of several Canadian International Schools in Egypt that has been invited to participate in this Pilot study. Your school administrator and board has approved this study. If you are an expatriate teacher from this school, you are invited to participate.

What will you ask me to do?

There are two phases to this research project, and each phase is voluntary and confidential. You can choose to participate in one phase and not the other, both phases, or not at all.

Part 1 of the research project: On-line Survey

You are invited to complete a short web-based survey that will take 10-15 minutes of your time. The survey is designed to understand expatriate teacher opinions about the school's workplace and social environment as well as general information that appeals to you about working abroad. Basic demographic information such as the number of years you've been teaching abroad will also be collected.

THE WEB-BASED SURVEY IS AVAILABLE NOW AT:

www.surveyfeedback.ca/surveys/wsb.dll/s/1q3f3.

The survey can be accessed and completed anonymously and confidentially through an authentication process, by entering the following universal codes:

Unique ID: **teacher**

udfO: **survey**

The codes above will allow you to enter the survey in order ensure that your responses to the survey questions cannot be used to identify you. **If you choose to participate, please only complete the survey once.**

Part 2 of the research project: Interviews

You are also invited to participate in one-on-one interviews conducted by the graduate student researcher at the schools. The interviews will happen near the end of January 2010. The interviews will take place for 15-20 minutes and questions will be designed to enable the graduate student to gather more in-depth information about the factors that contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability.

If you would like to participate in the interview, please email the graduate student at leanne.bilodeau@ubc.ca. Your name and e-mail address will not be disclosed to anyone other than the graduate student and thesis supervisor.

Expatriate teachers who email the graduate student will receive an email reply from the graduate student to schedule interview times at each school and to provide you with the consent form. Completed consent forms can be submitted to the graduate student at the time of the interview.

Are my responses to the survey and interview confidential?

Yes. Your individual responses are confidential and cannot be used to identify you. Aggregate information collected will be used for the purposes of informing this research and will be stored in compliance with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Any written records from the interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the private locked office of the graduate student at the UBC Okanagan Campus. All computer records will be stored on the graduate student's password-protected computer hard drive in a private locked office at the UBC Okanagan.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your completion of this survey and/or interview is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you do not have to respond to any question you do not feel comfortable answering. At any time, if you decide to stop, your survey and/or interview responses will not be used by the researcher and there will be no penalties to you.

What's in it for me / my school?

It is well known that the organizational environment and social climate of the school has an impact on the wellbeing and commitment of teachers. While there has been a lot of research concerning school organizational environment in developed countries, there is little to no research that to examine the school organizational environment or health of Canadian Offshore and International schools in rapidly developing countries. This research will help us to understand some of the organizational features and other issues about the local environment that affect expatriate teachers' feelings about staying or leaving.

At the completion of this research, a thesis, showing only aggregate data to ensure that no schools or teachers can be identified, will be produced. The intended outcome will be a description of features that are most important to expatriate teacher sustainability in international schools and teacher-identified approaches or suggestions to help to promote organizational practices and other considerations that are important to expatriate teacher sustainability.

Questions or concerns

Any questions or concerns about the research project can be directed to

Graduate Student
Leanne Bilodeau
Phone 250 860 7625
Mobile 250 317 8746
leanne.bilodeau@ubc.ca

Principal Investigator and Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Robert Campbell, Dean of Education,
University of British Columbia, Okanagan
Phone 250 807-9170
robert.campbell@ubc.ca

Appendix E: Interview Consent Form



UBC Okanagan Faculty of Education, 3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7

Consent Form – Expatriate Teacher Interviews

School Organizational Health and Teacher Sustainability: Canadian Offshore Schools in Egypt

This research project is being undertaken as a thesis for a Master of Arts in Education at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. The Graduate Student is Leanne Bilodeau and the Principal/Thesis Supervisor is Dr. Robert Campbell, Dean of Education, UBC Okanagan.

This research has been approved by _____
(*name of the senior administrator who authorized the research at the relevant school*)

Purpose

This study is designed to gather the perspectives of expatriate teachers about factors that contribute to their desire to stay working abroad. The aim of this study is to understand how the workplace environment of Canadian International Offshore Schools in Egypt and other factors related to the local environment and living abroad may contribute to expatriate teacher experiences and their desire to stay or leave.

Expatriate Teacher Interview Procedures

One-on-one expatriate teacher interviews will be conducted by the graduate student at the schools. The interviews will take place for 15-20 minutes and questions will be designed to enable the graduate student to gather more in-depth information about the factors that contribute to expatriate teacher sustainability. Completed consent forms can be submitted to the graduate student at the time of the interview.

Your participation in the interview is confidential. No identifying information such as your name or personal details will be recorded. Only aggregate information collected will be reported in the thesis. Records of the interviews will not identify you by name and cannot be used to identify you. Any written records from the interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the private locked office of the graduate student at the

UBC Okanagan Campus in accordance with BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). All computer records from the interviews will be stored on the graduate student's password-protected computer hard drive in the graduate student's private locked office at the UBC Okanagan.

Your participation in the teacher interviews is completely voluntary. If you elect to participate, you are able to withdraw at any time, either before or during the interview, by advising me, without any negative consequences. If you withdraw during the interview, none of your responses will be used in this research.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca. You may also contact Kristen Kane, Research Officer, Social Sciences and Humanities, Research Services Office at UBC Okanagan at 250 807 8832 or Kristen.kane@ubc.ca. If you have any concerns or wish to discuss any aspect of this research, please do not hesitate to contact Leanne Bilodeau, Graduate Student or Dr. Robert Campbell, Supervisor directly.

Leanne Bilodeau
Graduate Student
University of British Columbia, Okanagan
Okanagan
leanne.bilodeau@ubc.ca
Landline 250 807 8938
Mobile 250 317 8746
Fax 250 807 9295

Dr. Robert Campbell, Thesis Supervisor
Dean, Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia,
robert.campbell@ubc.ca
Landline 250 807-9170

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood this consent form and that you consent to participate in the teacher interview portion of this study:

Name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Email Address: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Themes and Sub-Themes Generated from the Thematic Analysis

PRIMARY THEMES	SECOND ORDER THEMES	THIRD ORDER THEMES	FOURTH ORDER THEMES
Experience Teaching	Overall teaching experience Teaching at current position Teaching at international schools		
Building Relationships Within the Schools	Supportive networks to navigate school culture Community of practice	Get things done Help is there when needed Best practice Building capacity	Marketability Fresh ideas Modelling from more experienced teachers Relevance of PD and career growth Difficulty developing relationships
Leadership	Availability Back up/supporting teachers Help in building relationships	Sharing experiences	With expat teachers from other schools Share fresh ideas, teaching practices and PD Share similar experiences Desire for a formal venue to build community
Building Relationships Beyond the Schools	Experiences of teachers Supportive roots Exposure to the Egyptian culture Challenges	Teaching focused	
Motivations to come and teach here	History and culture Employment potential Family or partner Workplace environment	Isolation Travel opportunities Multicultural experience Financial Employment Childcare Curriculum - quality/familiar Combining Canadian and Egyptian cultures Opportunity-own classroom Workload	

PRIMARY THEMES	SECOND ORDER THEMES	THIRD ORDER THEMES	FOURTH ORDER THEMES
Motivations to Stay	Employment potential Family or relationships Workplace environment	Career development and growth Having assistants Challenge	
Motivations to Leave	Cultural reasons Employment potential Family reasons Financial reasons	Pension Cost of living	
Recommendations from Expatriate Teachers	School environment	Turnover Resources Workload	
	For recruitment	Effective practices Accuracy	
	For retention	Relationships toward a sense of community Compensation and benefits	
Recruitment and Retention Strategies	For recruitment		
	For retention		
Teacher turnover	Who will succeed		

