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Perceptions of International Teacher Turnover in East Asia Regional Council of Schools

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

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BEd, University of Alberta, 1985

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

High teacher turnover has become a serious problem globally, in many international schools, and is a growing concern in segments of the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS). This persistent problem has a detrimental effect on student learning and upsets the culture of school communities. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory served as the framework for this qualitative case study research that examined the perceptions of EARCOS international overseas-hire teachers, to determine their beliefs regarding high teacher turnover in international schools. These questions gave direction to this study: What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools? What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools? What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools? Purposeful homogenous sampling was used to identify 8 focus group interview participants from the entire pre-K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools. Coded data were examined, analyzed, and categorized into themes related to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Member checking, peer debriefing, and external auditing were used to add validity to the research study. The analysis of the data and findings revealed that lack of effective mentorship, lack of administrative leadership support, and ineffective systems are the major contributors to international teacher turnover in international schools. A white paper was developed and constructed from the themes that emerged from this study and presented to EARCOS member school administrators, to potentially use to address the issue of increasing international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates in international schools. This acquired knowledge could lead to positive social change that can influence the practices, structural procedures, and policies of EARCOS and other international school systems related to teacher turnover.

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Dedication

It is with immeasurable gratitude that I dedicate my doctoral journey to my Lord and Savior and significant family members. Firstly, He gave me the strength to endure when I needed it most. Secondly, my mother's voice will continually resonate with me. She said, "I believe that education will open up many doors for you, therefore go to school first then you will have plenty of time to decide what you want to be when you grow up." Finally, I am deeply indebted to my three amazing children and wife for their understanding, patience, and tolerance for all the significant family events and activities that I missed and hours that I appropriated from them during my doctoral studies. I am extremely fortunate to have such wonderful individuals in my life, who love me unconditionally. It is my dream that my achievement will inspire them to continue to value the pursuit of knowledge and assiduousness in whatever they choose to do with their lives.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction to the Study

Acquiring formal education is a developmental process and a key contributor to the development of children worldwide; it is also the foundation for countries' sustainable economic development. Cox (2012) indicated that any successful competitive market economy needs to invest not only in its human capital but the quality of this capital, and countries can effectively achieve this investment through formal education. Although educators fully understand the necessity to attract and retain the strongest possible educators, researchers confirm that teacher turnover and retention are serious issues that have drawn the attention of researchers, educational analysts, policy-makers, and school administrators at local, national, and international levels (Butler, 2014; Cox, 2012; Hansen, Backes, & Brady, 2016; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wu, 2012). If the goal of educational systems is to provide the highest quality education to its students, it is important for schools to retain the teachers in whom they have invested by addressing the issues surrounding teacher turnover and retention.

International schools in the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) offer curricula and programs that parallel other international schools globally and employ qualified and competent teachers to serve the learning needs of their international student bodies. EARCOS is similar in its cultural, political, and geographical diversity to its other global counterparts, such as the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA) and the European Council of International Schools (ECIS). A critical element in EARCOS' and other global international schools' mandates are to retain and maintain elevated teaching standards while providing a high level of educational, philosophical,

and pedagogical platforms for their students (Mancuso, 2010). However, the increasing incidence of teacher turnover and challenges of teacher retention have raised concerns about the numbers of EARCOS teachers leaving their posts (Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010). Seasoned international educators were specifically targeted to contribute as study participants because these teachers can reflect and draw from a greater wealth of formative experiences and understandings because of their worldwide ventures, compared with recent and relatively inexperienced teachers entering the international teaching circuit (Angeline, 2014; Cox, 2012; Fong 2015). The purpose of this study was to investigate these challenges and specifically focus on the perceptions that seasoned international teachers have regarding why the incidence of teacher turnover continues to rise in some EARCOS member schools.

The literature search suggested that the short- and long-term issues surrounding teacher turnover and teacher retention are invariably complex. Empirical studies conducted by Anderson (2011); Karsenti and Collins (2013); Ingersoll and Strong (2011); Mancuso (2010); Mancuso et al. (2010); Mancuso, Roberts, White, Yoshida, and Weston (2011); and Ozoglu (2015) revealed a range of reasons for teachers leaving their place of employment, including voluntary transitions to other international schools, choosing to explore other career options, or retiring. According to Mancuso (2010), most international schools including EARCOS do not have tenured positions for teachers, and they tend to be more transient in nature. This structure lends itself to opportunistic teacher mobility, thus contributing to the increasing teacher turnover rates. Other research conducted by Fontaine, Kane, Duquette, and Savoie-Zajc (2012); Hofman, De Gieter, and Pepermans (2013); Lee, Hallinger, and Walker (2012); and Woodward and Alam (2010)

have identified key elements such as work environment and job satisfaction as key factors that contribute to early departures from international schools.

If the primary mandate of individual schools in the EARCOS organization is to continue to deliver consistently high-quality education standards to its students, regardless of the reasons for teacher turnover and the efforts made toward retaining teachers, researchers must critically examine the issues surrounding the increase in teacher turnover. If teacher turnover continues at increasing rates, the consequences of frequent teacher turnover to a school can be cataclysmic. It can adversely influence curricular and program continuity, result in a negative shift or sustainability of school-wide initiatives, and cause a serious loss of the dynamic stability and continuity of the important relationships that exist among teachers, students, and other school community members and present obvious negative effects on schools operating budgets (Mancuso, 2010; Wu, 2012). Therefore, if schools in the EARCOS organization acquire an understanding of the contributing reasons for teacher turnover, they will be better equipped to develop and employ strategies to encourage these teachers to remain, thereby maximizing their investment in teachers and ultimately making contributions to improvements in student learning (Luscombe, Lewis, & Briggs, 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010; Roberts, Mancuso, & Yoshida, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

High teacher turnover has become a serious problem locally, nationally, and internationally, and it is a growing concern in segments of the EARCOS region. Globally, high teacher turnover is a growing problem in schools in the 21st century. International teacher turnover presents a significant problem facing international schools, and the

persistent problem of teacher turnover adversely affects student learning and upsets the ethos of school communities (Cox, 2012; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Russell, Williams, & Gleason-Gomez, 2010; Varlas, 2013). Researchers conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative research on teacher turnover in school systems in the United States; however, limited studies have involved international overseas schools (Anderson, 2011; Bunnell, 2014; Lee et al., 2012; Mancuso et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2010). There remains much to be examined and discovered. In this study, I stressed the need for further studies on teacher turnover that will contribute to this body of knowledge, particularly in international school settings.

Although turnover rates vary from school to school and year to year internationally, percentages that range from 23% represent a higher-than-normal turnover rate (Mancuso et al., 2010). Compared with public schools in the United States, Mancuso et al. (2010) indicated that turnover rates in international schools are slightly higher than the 17% to 23% range experienced in U.S. public schools owing to the transient nature of international teacher populations in international school environments. McCollum (2014) reported that beginning teacher turnover rates in the United States have increased by 50% in the last 10 years and, nationally, turnover is now more than 20%.

Although EARCOS, as an organization, does not maintain statistics on teacher turnover, increasing international teacher turnover in individual member schools certainly would be an area of concern and is an issue that warrants attention (D. Krajczar, personal communication, October 30, 2015; D. Musco, personal communication, April 28, 2016). Krajczar added that any new research-based findings and any new innovative ideas based on the EARCOS administrative teams' collective leadership belief that can reduce

international teacher turnover, enhance school climate, and positively affect student learning within EARCOS schools are certainly beneficial (D. Krajczar, personal communication, October 30, 2015). Although I did not receive specific teacher turnover statistics, recent accreditation reports establish teacher turnover rates that range from 20% to 50% annually in some parts of the EARCOS region (International School Eastern Seaboard, 2016; International School Kuala Lumpur, 2014; International Schools Association of Thailand, 2014). In an earlier study conducted by Roberts et al. (2010) that involved 744 teachers and 32 school superintendents from EARCOS member schools, researchers found that the average teacher turnover rate was 32%. Mancuso et al. (2010) found this percentage to be higher than the 23% average for 2010.

Researchers conducted studies on international school systems with similar student and teacher demographics in international schools in the NESA and Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA) organization. Of the 22 American international schools surveyed in NESA, it was revealed that the international teacher turnover rates ranged from 0% to 60% with an average turnover rate of 23% (Mancuso et al., 2010). In a 2012 study conducted by Desroches (2013) involving 1,297 overseas hired teachers in the AASSA, they documented a significant variability in the range of teacher turnover percentages. In this 3-year period, the teacher turnover rate ranged from slightly more than 2% to slightly more than 83% of teacher turnover, with a median of 28%. Desroches (2013) and Mancuso et al. (2010) added that these schools, during the same time frame of these studies, also experienced adverse changes in student achievement gains and a negative shift in school morale.

According to Lindqvist, Nordanger, and Carlsson (2014), the increasing teacher turnover rates in the EARCOS network were not unlike the problems that other international schools are experiencing globally and presented the same types of challenges for all education systems. These challenges all include similar issues revolving around teacher turnover, and education systems are attempting to find solutions to reduce turnover. In South Africa, despite tough economic conditions, teachers leaving the workplace is more prevalent than ever and cannot be taken lightly.

Teacher turnover is a serious issue and suggests that internal operational issues exist in schools that are not being addressed to teachers' satisfaction (Mampane, 2012), thereby leaving schools in situations where student learning is compromised. A longitudinal survey of 1,351 teachers conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association indicated that 24% of teachers would probably leave the profession after the first year. In a similar study, the Australian Education Union found that approximately 45% of international teachers indicated that they would likely be leaving the profession after 5 years (Shuck et al., 2012). In Dubai, efforts to improve the quality of education for students are being crippled by high international teacher turnover, with reports of turnover being as high as 60% and 30% as being a common average (Bunnell, 2014). Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, and Russell (2012) indicated that teacher turnover would come at a cost to individual teachers, students, and the school community. Buchanan et al. (2013) maintained that making provisions for and maintaining the quality of teachers' experiences in the profession is of paramount importance. If educational institutions do not satisfactorily address teachers' professional concerns, their collective knowledge, experience, and commitment may be lost through turnover.

Although limited empirical statistical data on teacher turnover exists specifically for international schools, Manusco (2010) indicated that high teacher turnover rates are common in other international schools in the Asian region. Two recent empirical studies conducted in East Asia confirmed the challenges related to teacher turnover. Fong's (2015) correlational study of 116 teachers in international schools in Asia divulged a direct correlation between teacher job satisfaction and teacher turnover: the greater the job satisfaction, the lower the teacher turnover. Another similar study on teacher job satisfaction in international schools in Bangkok, Thailand (Ngotngamwong, 2012) revealed that teacher turnover rates were between 16% and 20%, whereas another study of international baccalaureate schools in East Asia also reported high teacher turnover rates as being a key challenge for their schools. Varlas (2013) conveyed that teacher turnover has a detrimental effect on international schools' positive progress. White (2012) added that the analysis of global trends indicates that addressing teacher turnover and retention is of primary significance for policy-makers and remains a priority for governments and educational institutions.

According to Desroches (2013); Fontaine et al. (2012); White (2012); and Wu (2012), many possible factors contribute to this continuing problem of teacher turnover, including push factors (school attributes such as school climate, student demographics, administrative support, staff interpersonal relations, and resources) and pull factors (employment package, career advancement, and personal conditions). Many international schools successfully hire teachers but subsequently struggle with providing adequate mentorship to assist them in staying (P. Richards, personal communication, December 17, 2013; D. Musco, April 28, 2016; G. Whiteman, personal communication, January 07,

2015). Evidence presented by Desroches (2013); Koech, Tikoko, and Chemwei (2014); and Sass, Flores, Claeys, and Pérez (2012) suggested that scholars agree that factors that contribute to teacher attrition are disruptive and are not healthy for an organization's success. In several related studies, researchers discovered that high teacher turnover poses significant financial costs for schools, contributes to a lower teacher program quality and staff morale, adversely affects student learning, and impedes the growth of a positive school climate (Russell et al., 2010; Sass et al., 2012; Varlas, 2013; Yesil-Dagli, 2012).

Although some research studies on teacher turnover may be considered conclusive in the revealed results, these may come from much smaller study groups. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012); Mancuso (2010); Mancuso et al. (2010); and Wood (2014) indicated that the limitations of current data on teacher turnover are due mainly to the inconsistencies in the approaches that researchers have taken in their data collection methodologies, the lack of longitudinal studies on teacher turnover, and the limited number of international studies conducted on teacher turnover. Despite these limitations, the body of knowledge related to teacher turnover continues to grow.

High teacher turnover rates continue to be universal challenges for education systems; the problem is widespread and affects international schools globally (Koech et al., 2014; Pitsoe, 2013; Wu, 2012). Fong's (2015) and Ngotngamwong's (2012) Asian studies on teacher turnover suggested that schools with high teacher turnover link to similar job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction factors, and these factors are accurate predictors of teacher turnover. Therefore, educational institutions such as member schools in EARCOS that are experiencing high teacher turnover can potentially benefit from

understanding the causes of turnover (Koech et al., 2014). Consequently, the focus of my study was to gain a deeper understanding of the problems associated with international teacher turnover that are currently being experienced by EARCOS member schools. In addition, understanding this phenomenon can contribute to the expanding body of research on teacher turnover in international overseas schools. Once researchers have gained a deeper understanding of some of the causes of teacher turnover, researchers can apply this knowledge to international school leaders. Administrators from these schools can then make informed decisions about what steps they need to take to address the issues surrounding teacher turnover, which will ultimately contribute to improved student learning (Wood, 2014).

Researchers should note that limited current empirical data are available on international teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools. Scholars conducted few studies on teacher turnover in the EARCOS region. Hence, one of my goals was to add to existing quantitative and qualitative research on international teacher turnover. Another goal was to lay the foundation for potential further exploration and investigation of international teachers' personal and professional perspectives on teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges of high teacher turnover and specifically focus on the perceptions that international teachers have on high international teacher turnover in EARCOS. This study is important because international schools, such as those in EARCOS, are highly independent educational institutions that spend substantial sums of money recruiting new teachers to replace those who leave

(Mancuso et al., 2010; Pitsoe, 2013). Furthermore, this type of study can further contribute to the body of knowledge on teacher turnover, with the goal of improving student learning.

In the United States, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future revealed that the estimated cost of public school teacher turnover in the United States is more than $7.3 billion annually (Varlas, 2013). Based on information obtained from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS), O'Meara (2014) indicated that international spending because of teacher attrition exceeded $2.6 billion. Cox (2012) found that the independent nature of international schools also means that collecting comprehensive data from transient teacher populations has shown to be quite challenging. Although ECIS has collected some data on teacher turnover in international schools, insufficient information is available to insightfully analyze the phenomenon of international school teacher turnover (Cox, 2012).

In addition to the financial costs incurred by schools because of teacher turnover, Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) and Johnson et al. (2012) argued that disruptions resulting from turnover have a significant and directly adverse effect on school programming and student learning. In an 8-year longitudinal study of more than 850,000 students, Ronfeldt et al. (2011) presented that teacher turnover has a profoundly negative effect on student performance and achievement beyond the boundaries of simply changing the teacher. Varlas (2013) added that perpetual high teacher turnover adversely affects interpersonal relationships between colleagues, lowers staff morale, negatively changes social dynamics of a school, and impedes the ability of a school to move

forward. In other words, all members of the school community suffer from the effect of this type of disruptive influence.

Based on anecdotal information provided by international teachers in some EARCOS member schools, perceived problems and challenges associated with teacher turnover are a reality, and this reality is adversely affecting student learning, school programming, and the ethos of the school community. Of the 2015–2016 EARCOS member schools, some are thriving and have turnover percentages in the single digits; others present turnover rates well above the 23% norm for international schools (Mancuso et al., 2010). These seasoned teachers shared their concerns about their job satisfaction, morale at their schools, and their decision process associated with whether they will remain at their current international school or begin their search for another teaching opportunity elsewhere.

Therefore, an examination of teacher perceptions of teacher attrition in EARCOS member schools may enable me to gain insights into the causes of teacher turnover. This much-needed knowledge may enable international school administrators to determine patterns and influences on teacher attrition. This information could subsequently lead to policy implications that will make provisions for potential solutions to address the problem of teacher attrition and turnover in EARCOS with the goal of improving student learning.

Definitions

The following terms will appear throughout the study:

East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (*EARCOS*): The EARCOS network is an international organization of 149 full members and 173 associate member

schools in the East Asia region. EARCOS is the world's largest association of schools and caters to the learning needs of more than 100,000 pre-K–12 students. What differentiates EARCOS from other international schools in the region is that in the EARCOS, English is the primary language of instruction (EARCOS, 2016).

International school: An international school is a school that caters to the educational needs of international students who reside as expatriates in the host country, along with a designated percentage of host country national students whose numbers vary depending on the school and country. These schools adopt and adhere to a national curriculum from another country or an adapted international curriculum usually accredited through international education authorities such as Western Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Association of Schools, or Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (Mancuso, 2010; Roberts, 2012).

International overseas-hire teacher: International overseas-hire teachers are expatriate teachers who are recruited and hired by individual schools to teach in overseas international schools. These teachers usually possess teaching credentials from their country of origin or universities abroad and are subject to contractual terms that are significantly different than those of host country national or local hire teachers (Mancuso, 2010).

Pull factors: Pull factors refer to conditions that may draw a teacher away from the school to seek employment elsewhere. These include elements such as the employment package, career advancement, and personal conditions (Dunn, 2014; Ong, Zhang, Huey, & Hie, 2014).

Push factors: Push factors refer to as the conditions that exist in the teachers' job, such as student demographics, student-teacher ratios, administrative support, teacher autonomy, staff interpersonal relations, professional and career development opportunities, and school climate (Dunn, 2014; Ong et al., 2014).

Teacher retention: Teacher retention refers to international teachers who remain in the same school that they were in the previous year (Jacob, Vidyarthi, & Carroll, 2012).

Teacher turnover: Teacher turnover refers to the replacement of an international teacher who leaves one school to seek employment at another school, to seek alternate employment, or to remain unemployed, and the departing teacher is replaced by a newly hired teacher (Mancuso, 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2011).

Significance of the Study

Teacher turnover in international schools can be a costly and persistent societal issue that schools and administrators encounter (Martinez, Frick, Kim, & Fried, 2010; Wu, 2012). Gilbert (2011) stated that schools invest phenomenal amounts of human and capital resources into recruiting, training and retaining new teachers, and when teachers choose to leave, it places a heavy burden on these schools. In addition, according to Petty, Fitchett, and O'Connor (2012), the quality of education for its students and sense of community in international schools may be temporarily adversely effected and compromised by the constant turnover of its teacher leaders. Researching this problem provided me with insights into the influences, patterns, and problems associated with high teacher turnover. I identified the reasons why teachers choose to leave a school, remain in a school, or leave the teaching profession permanently. In addition, I gathered data on what teachers believe the results of high turnover in schools is and what

suggested steps can be taken to reduce teacher turnover. With conclusive data from the intended research study, I suggested possible strategies that may influence institutional and social changes in EARCOS member schools that are directly related to teacher turnover. The intended goal is to influence practices, procedures, and policies of EARCOS member schools that will directly and positively affect student learning. Furthermore, I hope to add to the limited area of research conducted on international teacher turnover in international schools in the East Asia region and on the lives and experiences of international teachers in the context of EARCOS member schools.

The intended audience for any of my educational research is all school educators, including teachers and school administrators (school-based and district office) and those in EARCOS member schools. A greater understanding of explanations for international teacher turnover can also inform education boards and policy makers and provide them with strategies to reduce teacher turnover, thereby promoting teacher retention. A strategic plan that works for the different levels of administrators may include the following: (a) a summary presentation of the literature review pertaining to contributing factors linked to teacher turnover; (b) the introduction of periodic school self-analysis forums whereby teachers have an opportunity to convey their perspectives on specific personal or professional job-related issues; and (c) the presentation of this study on EARCOS international teachers perspectives, specifically related to their perception of high international teacher turnover, perception of the problems faced by international schools associated with high international teacher turnover, andrecommended strategies that can be used by EARCOS member schools to reduce teacher turnover. This study will also be helpful to other international school institutions by informing school leadership

teams of statistically significant factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The results can be used to promote an educational environment where low teacher turnover rates are the norm, consequently promoting schools' effectiveness and ultimately lead to improved student learning (Mancuso, 2010). Hughes (2012) indicated that teacher longevity contributes to improvements in student learning. If EARCOS member schools that are experiencing challenges with international teacher turnover rates come up with strategies that can reduce teacher turnover percentages, it is likely that that teachers may stay for a longer time frame, resulting in increased benefits for students (Hughes, 2012; Mancuso et al., 2011; Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

In addition to the direct effect on the educational field, this type of positive social change research can also affect spinoff businesses and professions in school communities (e.g., medicine, law, and industry). Teacher turnover in schools may also have a direct or indirect influence on the employment of parent workers in these other professional communities. If schools are functioning well and teacher turnover is low, working parents remain longer in their employment (D. Musco, personal communication, April 28, 2016). Buchanan et al. (2013); Hughes (2012); Mancuso (2010); and Petty et al. (2012) presented that this type of positive shift in teacher turnover promotes a healthy, effective, and sustainable school community, resulting in a higher quality education for its students.

For the participating EARCOS member schools that are experiencing problems with teacher turnover, the outcomes of this study can provide them with a greater understanding and explanation of high international teacher turnover as it applies to their school environments. As Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) and Herzberg

(2014) related, legitimate concerns surrounding motivational hygiene factors (job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, staff morale, and school programming) can serve to inform education authorities at their school, which will allow building opportunities that can springboard into developing strategies to reduce teacher turnover. Furthermore, this type of study can also bring awareness to other EARCOS member schools that may be on the brink of experiencing teacher turnover issues and allow them to make informed, strategical changes before they meet a similar fate. The ultimate goal of this research for the participating EARCOS member schools was the following: (a) gain an understanding of the perceptions that international teachers have that cause high international teacher turnover; (b) gain an understanding of the perceptions that international teachers have about the effect that high turnover has on their school; and (c) obtain suggestions from study participants on what schools can do more effectively to reduce international teacher turnover, which subsequently can lead to creating more effective learning environments for students.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative single-instrument case study design method approach for this study. Using focus group interviews, I obtained a greater in-depth explanation of international teacher's perceptions that international teachers have regarding teacher turnover in member schools in EARCOS. I obtained data from eight international school teachers selected from the entire pre-K–12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools (EARCOS 2016). I collected the data from two mini-focus group interviews, each with four participants. According to Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009) and Tang and Davis (1995), using smaller focus

groups will render recruiting and hosting easier, increase the comfort level of participants, and elicit greater in-depth insights, hence increasing the possibility of obtaining more comprehensive and credible data. The disadvantage of mini-focus groups is that the total range of experiences of the participants is more limited with a smaller group size (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Data were concurrently analyzed during and following the interviews to establish trends and meaning (Creswell, 2014). This revealed information sequentially may lead to developing potential solutions to combat teacher turnover EARCOS member schools.

Creswell (2012, 2014) indicated that this type of investigative empirical inquiry helps obtain high-quality, descriptive data. This method allowed me to provide a deeper understanding of the problem of teacher turnover in international schools. The selected design and the data collection methodology are supported by literature reviews of other empirical studies and were the best choice for the study because it enabled me to get close to the participants in a real-life context to gain comprehensive field data into teachers' personal perceptions of international teacher turnover. I considered a narrative design for this type of research study, but I did not select it. According to Creswell (2012), a narrative design is more of a socially constructed, relational reality. However, I focused on the individual subject reality of international teachers' perceptions of international teacher turnover to answer typical case-study-type design questions of *how* and *why*.

Research Question

Evidence gathered from local settings and current research indicated that high international teacher turnover rates in international schools adversely affect student

learning. In addition, high teacher turnover has implications on international schools including factors such as increased financial costs, reduction in quality of programs, decline in staff morale, and hampered overall school climate. Although the research conducted on teacher turnover and teacher retention in the United States is plentiful, researchers have conducted limited but growing empirical research on international overseas schools. Researchers have suggested a gap in past and current research and a greater need for more research to more fully understand the reasons for international teacher turnover and the effects of teacher retention in international schools.

To better understand teacher turnover in the EARCOS member schools, it is important to examine international teachers' perceptions of factors that contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools. It is also important to gather information about what international teachers believe are implications of high turnover on international school communities. Finally, it is necessary to gain insights about what international teachers believe are potential steps that can be taken to reduce high attrition rates among international teachers in international schools.

The following questions gave direction to this study:

1. What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools?

2. What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?

3. What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?

Review of Literature

Introduction

In this literature review, I explored and examined historical, theoretical, and empirical studies on the following: (a) teacher attrition, turnover, and retention, (b) teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, (c) the determinants of teacher mobility, (d) the personal and professional experiences of expatriate teachers in international schools' issues related to teacher turnover, and (e) institutional factors and leadership challenges associated with teacher turnover and retention. I based this review on information located in publications including journals and conference papers, peer-reviewed research investigations, doctoral dissertations and master's theses', scholarly journal articles, working papers, and books. A strategy that I used to conduct the literature review included an exhaustive preliminary search of Walden University's library, previous course reference lists, and databases found in Google Scholar, Thoreau, ERIC, ProQuest, and EBSCO host. Subsequent searches that assisted me in completing the literature review also included visitations to various dissertation reference sections provided by Walden University professors and library staff. Additional inquiries were made through and via feedback provided by colleagues using the Discussion Post in Walden University doctoral program courses. Terminology that I used in searches included words and phrases such as the following: *international school*, *international teacher*, *teacher attrition*, *teacher turnover, teacher retention*, *teacher job satisfaction*, *teacher motivation*, *teacher job dissatisfaction*, *determinants of teacher mobility*, *push factors*, *pull factors*, *administrative support*, *school culture*, *school climate*, *why teachers leave*, *professional mobility*, *teacher induction and mentoring*, *teacher resilience*, *teacher autonomy*, *cost of*

turnover, *job stressors*, *student achievement*, *early career teachers*, and *stayers, leavers, movers*.

This investigation provided me with a better understanding of past and current educational practices, perceptions, and trends related to teacher turnover. I presented information about implications that high teacher turnover has on educational institutions, teachers, students, and school communities. Although I focused on international schools, it is important to provide background contextual information from local and national education settings. I presented the conceptual framework and covered the topics of (a) understanding teacher turnover; (b) push and pull factors affecting teacher turnover; (c) factors that influence a teacher's decision to stay or leave; (d) institutional perspectives of teacher turnover; and (e) methodological implications of research on teacher turnover.

Conceptual Framework

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory served as my framework for this study and was an important resource in helping to identify factors that international teachers believe have an effect on high teacher turnover in the EARCOS institutions and what the result of high teacher turnover is on schools. According to Herzberg et al. (1959) and Herzberg (2014), the motivation-hygiene theory suggested that certain workplace factors can cause job satisfaction while other factors can cause dissatisfaction. This theory applies to the research at hand because international schools, by design, attract different kinds of teachers with varying job-related skills than non-international schools (Barbieri, Rossetti, & Sestito, 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Iucu, Panisoara, & Panisoara, 2011; Ozoglu, 2015). International teacher populations in international overseas schools are specialists in their area of expertise, possess exceedingly marketable job-related skill sets, and these

teachers also tend to be relatively mobile (Mancuso, 2010). The length that international teachers' stay in any location is 2.3 years on average, according to data from International School Services (2016).

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory also builds on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory of human motivation, which postulates that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are completely independent considerations. Herzberg identified several motivational factors, some of which may increase job satisfaction for teachers; these factors include achievement, recognition, work, responsibility, advancement, and growth (Fong, 2015). In addition, Fong (2015) suggested that the absence of Herzberg's hygiene factors, which include elements such as company policies, supervision, collegial interactions, work conditions, salary, status, and job security, may result in a teacher's job-related dissatisfaction. It is important to note that there is a non-linear relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction: an increase in one factor does not necessarily mean that there will be a correspondingly adverse effect on the other. This information may prove beneficial to determine what steps EARCOS school administrators can take to reduce the increasing high teacher turnover rates.

Although Maslow and Herzberg developed their theories many decades ago, the teacher labor force and the individual response to employment factors has changed significantly (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012). From the 1960s to 1980s, the factors that influenced job satisfaction tended to be those that provided extrinsic rewards (Pasalo, 2012), such as promotions, increases in employee benefits, bonus incentives, or reductions in work hours (Fong, 2015). In quantitative studies, McCollum (2014) and Pasalo (2012) reported a shift in motivational indicators during the past 25 years, a

reported shift away from extrinsic motivators toward intrinsic motivators. These motivators include increased collaboration, development of collegial relationships, and personal professional achievements (Aziri, 2011; Feldmann, 2011; Hofmans et al., 2013). Waititu (2010) and Pitsoe (2013) suggested that the motivation-hygiene theory provides a good framework for individuals to analyze their values to help them determine their career path. This theory, as applied to the teaching profession, suggests that individuals regularly make a calculated and systematic cost-benefit analysis of their future in teaching. It is likely that, by applying this theoretical perspective of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction to teachers working in the EARCOS environment, significant themes will emerge to address the research questions related to high teacher turnover. This will provide direction that could lead to the development of potential solutions to address the problem of high teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools.

Understanding Teacher Turnover

Professionals leaving their chosen line of work is not a new concept in any industry; however, it is an ongoing problem in education (Lytle, 2013). To enable educational institutions to develop ways to combat the growing problem of teacher turnover, this concept must first be understood. Mancuso (2010) and Ronfeldt et al. (2011) referred to teacher turnover as the replacement of a teacher who leaves one school to seek employment at another school, to seek alternate employment, or to remain unemployed, and a newly hired teacher replaces the departing teacher. Teacher turnover does not include situations where schools decrease or increase teacher staffing numbers due to growth, restructuring, or reductions in enrollment. In studies conducted by Lytle (2013) and Ronfeldt et al. (2011), researchers suggested that it is important that

information about staffing and teacher turnover needs to be carefully examined to ensure its accuracy.

Empirical research on teacher turnover conducted by Lytle (2013) and McCollum revealed that the number of teachers leaving the field of education each year and the number of teachers entering the profession is becoming increasingly disproportionate, Other quantitative and qualitative studies (Jacob et al., 2012; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2012) indicated that fewer than 25% of new teachers entering the profession are choosing to remain after their first year. In a quantitative study conducted in American schools, Dillon (2009) reported that the percentage of teacher turnover rates exceeded 20%. In other studies, these numbers increase to 30% (Shaw & Newton, 2014), 39% (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007), and nearly 50% (Waddell, 2010) of teachers who choose to leave the profession after 5 years. These studies provide a better understanding of the magnitude of the issues surrounding teacher turnover.

Over many decades, numerous qualitative and quantitative studies of different designs have been conducted to determine what rationale teachers have for leaving the teaching profession. These studies covered a broad cross section of both the profession and specialized segments within the profession. They target former teachers, new teachers, veteran teachers, and school administrators in the hope of better understanding the factors that influence teacher mobility (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lynch, 2012; Schafer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012). Statistics and other data collected speak to both the enormity and diversity of information available on teacher turnover and the reasons why teachers leave the profession.

Research studies include topics dealing with (a) factors that influence retention, turnover, and attrition (Gardner, 2010; McCollum, 2014); (b) teacher retention and school leadership (Ngotngamwong, 2012; Shaw & Newton, 2014); (c) challenges to teacher resilience (Gu & Day, 2013); and (d) teacher personality and organizational climate (Burns & Machin, 2013; Pasalo, 2012). Other researchers found that the most common reasons for teacher turnover included; professional staffing actions (Lytle, 2013), teacher salary and benefits (Pasalo, 2012), personal reasons (Petty et al., 2012), and job satisfaction and workplace conditions (Taleb, 2013). The research in this area covers a vast segment of the professional teaching population and reveals a multitude of individual views, both positive and negative, that provide greater insights and contribute to a greater understanding of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Understanding the reasons behind the issue of teacher turnover will provide valuable information to enable educational institutions better to develop ways to combat this growing problem.

Push and Pull Factors Affecting Teacher Turnover

Candle (2010) and Ong et al. (2014) determined that teachers draw from two choices for their professional career decisions: to remain employed at their current location or to leave for alternative options available to them. Only by viewing and analyzing teacher turnover through the motivation-hygiene theory lens could I closely examine the push and pull factors associated with teacher turnover (Dunn, 2014; Ong et al., 2014). Both factors contribute to the decision-making process. Push factors (including lack of support, lack of autonomy, and increasing professional interpersonal conflicts) correlate with elements that compel teachers to leave their school; in contrast, pull factors (such as attractive benefits, career advancement, and personal and personal-professional

conditions) draw teachers away (Dunn, 2014). Determining factors that affected the decision to leave included poor teacher preparation and mentoring programs, and the lack of teacher autonomy (Gujarati, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; McCollum, 2014; Pirkle, 2011; Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011). In related studies, researchers reported that a lack of administrative presence and support, inadequate mentoring programs, and a deficiency in collaborative opportunities were critical factors that affected teachers' decisions to leave schools (Curtis, 2012; Kealy, 2010; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012; Martinez et al., 2010; Petty et al., 2012). A stressful working climate, including inadequate instructional planning time, insufficient collaborative opportunities, and challenging collegial partnerships, contributed to the unwillingness to remain in a school (Gujarati, 2012; Hoigaard, Giske, & Sundsli, 2012; Knox & Anfara, 2013; Murawaski, 2012; Sass et al., 2012).

On the other hand, several researchers found that an increase in salary and bonuses would entice teachers to stay longer, despite other conditions (Gratz, 2011; Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010; Mancuso, 2010; Petty et al., 2012). This is not always the case, however; despite being compensated well, teachers in Hong Kong continue to migrate from teaching to other professions (Lam & Yan, 2011). Mancuso et al. (2011) and Schaefer et al. (2012) indicated that teachers who were seeking to advance their careers or move to assignments that were not available in their current school were more prone to be drawn away from their current employ. Finally, personal circumstances such as family issues, illness, job security, teacher self-efficacy, and environmental conditions were identified as other pull factors that drew teachers away to seek alternate

teaching opportunities (Fong, 2015; Hoigaard, et al., 2012; Pasalo, 2012; Wagner et al., 2013).

Because there are many variables involved in making these important employment decisions (Candle, 2010; Fontaine et al., 2012), understanding the motivation behind the push and pull factors related to the problem of teacher turnover in international schools is essential (Dunn, 2014). This claim is supported by Cox (2012), Meyiwa (2011), Ngotngamwong (2012), and Roberts et al. (2010), who added that researchers must examine other factors, such as individual characteristics or organizational attributes, to gain greater insight into understanding the problems associated with teacher turnover.

Factors That Influence Teachers' Decisions to Stay or Leave

Research has revealed a growing number of common trends which teachers present as their reasons to stay or leave their current teaching situation. Specific factors that influence the decision to stay or leave vary from individual to individual and may also change at different stages of one's teaching career (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Curtis, 2012, Greenfield, 2015). Jacob et al. (2012) and Ronfeld et al. (2011) indicated that some teachers choose to remain in their current teaching situation irrespective of their current employer or the teaching assignment. This does not necessarily imply that a teacher is satisfied with their current situation; it simply means that this choice does not contribute to teacher turnover. Ngotngamwong (2012) identified teachers who *leave* as those who leave the teaching profession, and teachers who *move* as individuals who transfer to other schools. In this study, I identified teachers who *leave*

their teaching assignments as individuals who choose to leave their current employ to seek another teaching assignment or another type of employment.

Several empirical studies identified job satisfaction as being one of the major factors that inspire teachers to stay. Ngotngamwong (2012) indicated that a teacher's level of satisfaction is strongly correlated to having autonomy in the decision-making processes within schools, especially in decisions that directly and indirectly affect student performance and achievement. Adams (2010) proved that teachers who are satisfied with their work contribute to the success of an educational organization. Contributing toward student and organizational success in an atmosphere of collegiality provides individual teachers with a sense of value and self-worth (Knox & Anfara, 2013; Maslow, 1943; Mota, 2010; Taleb, 2013), and allows school leadership to recognize teachers' contributions as assets toward growth and sustainability of the organization (Lynch, 2012; Mancuso et al., 2011). According to Mansfield, Beltman, and Price (2014), a teacher's self-efficacy has positive effects on teacher job satisfaction. This claim has also been supported by Fong (2015), Greenfield (2015), and Hoigaard et al. (2012).

Other gratifying experiences that contribute to greater job fulfillment relate to the provision and acquisition of personal-professional growth opportunities within the context of professional learning communities (Bailey, 2013; Battersby & Verdi, 2015; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Professional learning and development opportunities are critical for equipping teachers with the foundational skills and continuing education required to work collaboratively with colleagues, practice their craft effectively, and remain happy in their jobs (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Martinez et al., 2010; Pasalo, 2012; Stronge et al., 2011). Additional contributing experiences toward job satisfaction, as

identified by Fong (2015), include positive school climates, reasonably attractive salary packages, and effective communication between stakeholders in school communities. Greenfield (2015), Ngotngamwong (2012), and Pasalo (2012) also supported this claim.

Teachers often leave schools due to dissatisfaction with their assignment. Teacher turnover that occurs naturally because of retirements, promotions, restructuring, and personal reasons is inevitable (Cox, 2012; Roberts, 2012); however, research reveals numerous factors that encourage teachers to leave schools prematurely, creating unwanted teacher turnover (Fontaine et al., 2012; Koech et al., 2014; White, 2012). Many of these factors are simply the opposite of ones that contribute to the decision to stay at a school and are often areas where the school is lacking support for teachers (Armer, 2011; Aziri, 2011; Butler, 2014; Gujarati, 2012; Hofmans et al., 2013). Examples include the lack of freedom and autonomy; disillusionment with student performance; feeling devalued; lack of administrative support; lack of opportunities for professional growth and development; and an insufficient salary package.

Additional contributors to teacher job dissatisfaction may include heavy classroom and school workloads (Paul & Phua, 2011; Wood, 2014); excessive bureaucratic paperwork (Pasalo, 2012); the absence of a positive school culture and climate (Feldman, 2011); low staff morale (Pitsoe, 2013; Varlas, 2013); inadequate provisions for planning and resources (Murawski, 2012; Robinson, 2010); and poor student motivation and areas of concern with discipline (Prather-Jones, 2011). Based on the research, it is becoming increasingly evident that job dissatisfaction may result from a combination of factors, including the incorrect type of employment motivators.

Institutional Perspectives of Teacher Turnover

Teachers are foundational to student learning (Ngotngamwong, 2012; Russell et al., 2010; Sass et al., 2012); therefore, the teaching profession requires qualified, competent, long-term teachers as the cornerstones of the profession to adequately address the learning needs of students (Bailey, 2013; Gujarti, 2012). In schools that experienced low teacher turnover rates, Barbieri, Rossetti, and Sestito (2013) and Alecia (2014) reveal that there is a greater likelihood that student achievement and performance will be positively affected. Alternately, students in schools that face unusually high turnover rates are at a significant disadvantage (Mota, 2010). Numerous studies, including those conducted by Mancuso et al. (2010) and Ronfeldt et al. (2011), confirmed that high teacher turnover frequently results in a detrimental effect on student learning potential and academic achievement.

In high turnover schools, new teachers need to be continually hired to replace departing educators (Mancuso et al. 2011; Mota, 2010). The effect of this replacement process manifests in several ways. Firstly, administrators find that the hiring process takes a considerable amount of time and effort, reducing the time available to perform the duties and responsibilities related to teacher preparation and performance (Fong, 2015). This lack of administrative presence reduces the personal contact that teachers need, consequently decreasing the likelihood of personal encouragement, support, development, and trust (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Secondly, Ozoglu (2015) discovered that schools with frequent turnover were harder to staff, and often ended up with inexperienced teachers filling these staffing voids. According to Ozoglu (2015) and Curtis (2012), the process time for optimal

teacher effectiveness takes approximately 5 years. During this timeframe, with the absence of effective and consistent teaching delivered by experienced teachers, students' learning potential and performance may be severely hampered. In addition, despite the professionalism, confidence, and transferability of teaching practices that veteran teachers pass on to new teachers, their capacity to contribute to the profession tends to fade as time goes on (Fong, 2015). This finding may be linked to teacher burnout or may simply be a by-product of the challenging years of service to the profession (Page & Kemp, 2013).

Finally, the greatest effect of teacher turnover is experienced by the students (Mancuso et al., 2010). In the field of education, it is teachers who have the most profound effect on shaping students' character, learning potential, and achievement (Gu & Day, 2013; Martinez et al., 2010; Munoz, Prather, & Stronge, 2011; Teleshaliyev, 2013). This effect is evident in effective schools, and effective schools retain good teachers (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). Therefore, in schools where there are good teachers, the chances of these schools also having successful students will be much higher (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010).

Numerous studies conducted by researchers (Barbieri et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2013) all reached the same conclusion: Although some turnover is natural and expected, chronic teacher turnover negatively affects student learning, progress, and achievement. In addition to the effects on students, Buchanan et al. (2013), Mancuso (2010), and Mancuso et al. (2011) stated that teacher turnover could also result in an unfavorable effect on other aspects of the school community. These effects include (a) the loss of stability in teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships; (b) a school's

inability to maintain program continuity; (c); lost momentum in school-wide development initiatives; and (d) the burden of increased costs associated with teacher recruitment and replacement (Ingersoll, 2001; Mancuso, 2010).

When teachers leave a school, the educational community experiences several challenges (Mancuso, 2010; Mota, 2010). These challenges often leave students at an achievement and performance disadvantage, because the skills that go into quality teaching take time to develop and require the students to adapt accordingly (Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). These changes can also undermine and affect a school's efforts to maintain or implement school-wide development initiatives and reforms (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Mota, 2010); successful educational reforms often require a shared and sustained commitment by school communities (Anderson, 2010; Dajani, 2014). It takes time for teachers to make the adjustments, and new teachers must be brought on board as well (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Finally, the direct and indirect costs of teacher recruitment, replacement, and training leaves schools in a situation where they must allocate their spending to these areas rather than to those that can enhance student learning (Luscombe et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2010; Watlington et al., 2010). If increasing student engagement, providing an excellent education, and ensuring a healthy learning environment are part of a school's mandates, then schools must work toward protecting their investment in teachers (Greenfield, 2015; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lauchlan, Gibbs, & Dunsmuir, 2012). Because teachers are the ones that provide students with a foundation for the future, schools need to protect their investment in their teachers (Lauchlan et al., 2012). To assist schools in this regard, Gujarti (2012) and Mancuso et al. (2011) recommended that educational institutions

commit to reviewing their teacher retention practices. It is imperative that school administrators understand what motivates their teachers to stay or leave a teaching position (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Khan & Aziz, 2013; Waititu, 2010; Yesil-Dagli, 2012).

Future studies that focus on teacher turnover and retention may help educational institutions identify factors that cause turnover (Beltman et al., 2011). This can help them better understand the issues (Greenfield, 2015) and as they work toward developing a sustainable plan for teacher retention. The results of these studies will also inform educational policy makers and administrators about issues related to teacher turnover as they attempt to address the issues relating to reducing teacher turnover rates at the political level (Butler, 2014; Khan & Aziz, 2013; Varlas, 2013; Weston, 2014).

Methodological Implications of Research on Teacher Turnover

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is appropriate for this type of study because the goal of this research is to examine international teachers' perceptions about teacher turnover and retention. The theory also links to teachers' employment realities including satisfiers (motivators) and hygienes (dissatisfiers) of their jobs (Herzburg, 2014; Herzburg et al., 1959). Research conducted by Chandra, Cooper, Cornick, and Malone (2011); Leibowitz, Schalkwyk, Ruiters, Farmer, and Adendorff (2012); and Pasalo (2012) indicated that teachers can attain job satisfaction through the achievement of their hygiene needs such as professional, collegial working relationships, an attractive benefits package, and optimal employment conditions). On the other hand, their hygiene needs are ephemeral, so teachers then need different types of motivators such as; professional learning opportunities, achievement recognition, and job advancement prospects (Bailey,

2013; Chandra et al., 2011; Fong, 2015). According to Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, and August (2012), their studies validated the use of Herzberg's theory in an educational context even though they did not apply this theory to an educational setting. The results from this study will provide me with the push and pull (motivational and hygiene) factors that contribute to the research on teacher turnover, with the goal of reducing turnover and ultimately having a direct positive effect on student learning.

In addition to knowing which factors relate to teacher turnover, researchers will want to determine what the implications of turnover will be (Mancuso, 2010; Mancuso et al., 2010; Mancuso et al., 2011; Ngotngamwong, 2012). Evidence from studies conducted by Dajani (2014); Hansen (2013); and Mancuso et al. (2011) revealed that schools that retain teachers for longer periods of time have more successful track records in student performance and achievement than schools with higher than normal teacher turnover rates. Studies of schools that experience unusually high rates of teacher turnover encountered less favorable performance records from their students (Hansen et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2013).

Teachers and school communities are also directly affected by high teacher turnover. Ingersoll and Merrill (2012) and Simon and Johnson (2015) suggested that there can be both positive and negative implications associated with teacher turnover. Schools can cull teachers who have waned in their productivity levels or are no longer willing to move in the direction that the school is heading, which can occur from time to time (Leithwood, 2010). New staff members can bring in new ideas, and the transition for existing staff members can offer regeneration and revitalization of creativity (Fong, 2015). On the other hand, high teacher turnover can result in the creation of

organizational challenges. These often lead to (a) disruptions in the continuity of major projects and initiatives; (b) problems in the development, maintenance and sustainability of the desired school climate; and (c) issues related to that of building a strong school community (Mancuso, 2010). This claim has also been supported by Fong (2015); Petty et al. (2012); Varlas (2013); and Yesil-Dagli (2012).

Subsequently, researchers will also want to gain insights into potential solutions to address this problem in international schools. Research conducted by Dunn (2014) implied that it is vital to understand teacher turnover due to the positive correlation between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions. This claim has also been supported by Mancuso (2010); Koech et al. (2014); and Puangjakta and Vinitwatanakhun (2015). Based on the motivation-hygiene theory framework, Candle (2010) and Waititu (2010) advocated that research on the insights of teachers' perceptions of their international colleagues will provide a better understanding of the causes and implications of teacher turnover.

This much-needed knowledge will enable school administrators to determine teacher's behavioral patterns and factors that influence teacher turnover (Butler, 2014; Fuller, Waite, Miller, & Irribarra, 2013; Lindqvist et al., 2014; Mancuso et al., 2010; Meyiwa, 2011; Pitsoe, 2013; Richwine, Biggs, Mishel, & Roy, 2012). Findings from the study can also be used by educational administrators to assist them in making informed, solution-based staffing decisions, including recruitment, retention, promotions, contract renewals, and benefits (Anderson, 2011; Butler, 2014; Koech et al., 2014; Mancuso et al., 2011; Puangjakta & Vinitwatanakhun, 2015; Varlas, 2013; White, 2012). Information gleaned from the research could later lead to policy implications that will make

provisions for potential solutions to address the problems associated with international teacher turnover in international schools such as those located in the EARCOS region. The goal is to improve student learning, performance, and achievement.

Summary

Researchers indicated that there is a strong connection and important relationship between teacher turnover and student performance and achievement (Mancuso et al., 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Russel et al., 2010; Sass et al., 2012). Educators have the most influential and powerful effect on shaping students' character, learning potential, and achievement (Gu & Day, 2013; Munoz et al., 2011; Teleshaliyev, 2013). The Western Association of Colleges and Schools' reports from schools in the EARCOS region such as the International School Eastern Seaboard (2016), the International School Kuala Lumpur (2014), and the International Schools Association of Thailand (2014), along with studies conducted by Mancuso et al. (2011), revealed that chronic teacher turnover negatively affects student learning, progress, and achievement and that a reduction in teacher turnover in these same schools resulted in schools with more successful track records in student performance and achievement than schools with higher than normal teacher turnover rates. In addition to the effect on student achievement, these studies also conveyed similar comparable shifts in a school climate that hinged on teacher turnover shifts.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (2014) identified several key factors that specifically related and contributed to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of teachers, which I explored in this literature review. The components of the motivation-hygiene theory and additional information gleaned from the literature review can be useful tools

for teachers to use to analyze decision-making processes related to their continued professional involvement in the teaching field (Pitsoe, 2013). Because it is every school's mandate to educate students to achieve and maintain the highest teaching standards (Mancuso, 2010), it is significant to have a greater understanding of the factors that influence the decision to stay in or leave a teaching assignment. Of course, it is important that school administrations protect their investment in teachers as well (White, 2012).

Education is central to any successful country's sustainable economic development; education systems spend substantial sums of money in recruiting teachers, who play a pivotal role in this matrix (Cox, 2012). The ability of education systems to provide high quality instruction to its students is dependent on teachers, and research indicates that there are significant advantages to schools that minimize teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). Understanding the issues and challenges surrounding international teacher turnover in EARCOS schools can directly benefit and affect student learning, reduce teacher turnover, and positively affect education systems globally. Currently, there is a gap in both research and practice in international schools concerning teacher turnover; it is the intent of this study to bridge that gap.

The first section of this proposed study presented the problem, which included an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, rationale for this study, definitions, significance of the study, nature of the study, research questions, implications, a comprehensive review of the literature, and a summary. The second section presented the methodology, which included an introduction, research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, data collection and analysis, protection of

participants' rights, assumptions and limitations, and a conclusion. Included in this study is a comprehensive description of the various components of this project.

Implications

This proposed research attempted to determine international teachers' perspectives on high teacher turnover in international schools. By investigating the perspectives of international teachers, this research emphasized the professional experiences of experienced international teachers in a familiar context. Although there is an abundance of quantitative and qualitative research on teacher turnover and retention in U.S. school systems and a limited amount of quantitative studies conducted in international schools, there is a limited amount of international studies conducted in the East Asia region and no other qualitative research specifically on this topic located on EARCOS schools. While providing me with foundational information about the past and current educational practices, perceptions, and trends related to teacher turnover, this study also served to inform administrators, teachers, students, and school communities about the implications that high teacher turnover has on student performance, school climate, and school communities. This research also provided insights and information for parents, education boards, and policy makers to assist them in creating strategies to reduce teacher turnover and promote teacher retention. EARCOS school administrators can then employ necessary measures steps to reduce the increasing high teacher turnover rates. In addition, this research can also contribute to the existing quantitative and qualitative research base and could pave the path for potential further exploration and investigation of teachers' personal and professional perspectives on teacher turnover and retention in international schools.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

In Section 2 of my research study, I present and describe the research design and approach that I used to examine international teachers' perceptions of factors that contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools. In addition, I obtain information about what international teachers believe are implications of high turnover in international school communities and gained insights about what international teachers believe are potential steps that can be taken to reduce high turnover rates of international teachers in international schools. I provide a description and justification of the selected setting, study population, instrumentation that I used, and my role as the researcher. I outline the procedures that I used to ensure the integrity of the study and compliance with Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) research ethics and protocols for the protection of research study participants. Also, I outline the procedures and protocols for analyzing and validating the collected data. Finally, I conclude this section with assumptions and general limitations of the study.

Research Design and Approach

Based on a pragmatic worldview where I liberally drew from qualitative assumptions (see Creswell, 2012), I used a qualitative focus that enabled me to address the problem of teacher turnover in international schools. Creswell (2012) indicated that qualitative research can examine multiple layers of the existing problem. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) submitted that qualitative research involves rigid examination of the interaction between variables in a natural setting. While guarding against personal bias and considering contextual influences, I sought to understand

international teachers' perspectives on teacher turnover. This differs from quantitative research in that quantitative studies gather data using objective methods and attempt to remove the researcher from the investigation (Lodico et al., 2010). However, in this case, a qualitative study enabled me to gain access to the innermost levels of understanding of teachers' perspectives.

Creswell (2012) and Lodico et al. (2010) identified case study research as a qualitative empirical inquiry that investigates one or more cases through time, using a detailed, descriptive data collection process involving several sources of information. Case study research is appropriate for this study because I employed a single-instrument case study design analysis to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the problems associated with international teacher turnover that are currently being experienced by member schools in EARCOS. This design enabled me to be close to the participants to gain insights into their perceptions in a real-life context.

I considered other comparable qualitative and quantitative research designs, but I did not select them. Ethnography could provide thick descriptors that match my intended objective. However, this approach would involve a significant amount of personal time commitment and may also adversely affect the data collection procedures, owing to the transient nature of current international school employment patterns and trends. I also considered a narrative design, but I did not select it because a narrative, according to Creswell (2012), is more of a socially constructed, relational reality. I, on the other hand, focused on an individual subject reality (international teachers' perceptions) to answer typical case study design questions of *how* and *why*. A plethora of quantitative studies has effectively been conducted on teacher turnover, generating valuable information.

Although quantitative studies could certainly be useful to gain a deeper understanding of the problems associated with international teacher turnover and further extend the body of knowledge on teacher attrition, Koech et al. (2014) and Mason and Poyatos Matas (2015) suggested that empirical data obtained from continued qualitative research is paramount to enable understanding and allow researchers to address the concerns of teacher attrition in international schools.

Setting and Population

I gained authorization from the EARCOS executive director (Appendix A), approval from the Walden University IRB (Appendix B), and permission from EARCOS superintendents (Appendix C) to conduct this study involving selected schools from the 149 EARCOS member schools. EARCOS school superintendents who elected to have their schools participate in this research emailed the research study participation form (Appendix D) and close-ended, web-based EARCOS research study participant eligibility survey (Appendix E) to the principals at each of the participating EARCOS member schools. This information was available for the entire pre-K–12 international, overseas hire teacher population of the participating 149 EARCOS member schools. Not all superintendents or principals chose to have their school participate in the research.

Upon receiving confirmation of participation in the study from study participants, I sent a follow up email to the participants confirming that they have been selected to participate in the mini-focus group interviews. I only contacted the selected study participants to provide further information about the study and interview process. I also contacted all superintendents and principals by email to thank them for their participation in the survey.

Creswell (2012, 2014) indicated that the purpose of the initial survey is to gather demographic information from all study participants, and, in this study, I used it to identify prospective focus group research candidates. I used a purposeful homogenous sampling strategy that met a specific operational definition (Lodico et al., 2010; Mancuso, 2010). Although I considered other sampling strategies including maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling was suitable for this study because of its reduced variation, aid in simplifying analysis, and help to facilitate focus group interviewing (Laerd Dissertation, 2012).

The composition of this sample included eight participating international teachers, subsequently divided into two mini-focus groups with four participants in each group. I based the criteria used to select study participants on my extensive involvement in international education, which spans nearly 30 years and eight different countries. This is supported by inferences made by Angeline (2014); Cox (2012); Fong (2015); and Sargeant (2012), who indicated that seasoned international educators can reflect and draw from a greater wealth of formative, focused experiences and understandings as a result of their worldwide ventures, their involvement in different educational environments, and exposure to a variety of leadership styles and colleagues with diverse backgrounds compared to their less experienced, less travelled, and less focused counterparts entering the international teaching profession. Participants selected for the focus groups included teachers who (a) were willing to share their experiences related to teacher turnover because of their exposure to different international teaching settings in a single 90-minute focus group interview setting with four other international educators, (b) were international teachers employed on an international overseas-hire contract, (c) have

taught in at least three different countries, (d) have taught in at least three different international schools, and (e) have at least 4 years of international school teaching experience. Morgan and Spanish (1984) indicated that the optimal size for focus groups are between six to 10 participants. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) and Lankoski and Bjork (2015) suggested that a group size from four to 10 participants is ideal; further, Tang and Davis (1995) proposed that between six to 12 are the best. I selected eight participants for this interpretative study based on the premise that this sample size can realistically enable data saturation and informational redundancy.

If more than eight volunteer participants met the initially established sample criteria from the web-based survey and confirmed their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews to me using email, a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy would have been employed to identify the final eight participants for the two mini-focus groups. Although using a convenience sampling strategy may produce information-poor data, according to Lodico et al. (2010) and Merriam (2009), because the EARCOS region covers a wide area and includes international teachers with very similar characteristics there is a limited risk of not obtaining information rich data. In addition, because of the limitations of time, financial resources, and site availability linked to my purposeful homogenous sampling participant criteria and data collection procedures, compromises were made, and a combined convenience sampling strategy and simple random sampling strategy were the most viable alternative options to use for this study. I made the final selection of the mini-focus group participants after receiving the confirmations from the EARCOS school superintendents and principals. Because more than eight volunteer participants met the

initially established sample criteria from the web-based survey and confirmation of their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews, I used a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy to identify the final eight participants for the two mini-focus groups.

Because the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of international teachers' perceptions of teacher turnover, I sought more in-depth insights. Lankoski and Bjork (2015) and Tang and Davis (1995) supported the small group size selected for the mini-focus group interviews. Both studies indicated the following: (a) small focus groups sizes enable me to probe deeper into understanding issues by enabling all participants to share their experiences and insights, (b) the group dynamics change adversely when participants are eager to share but are prohibited from describing their experiences in a larger group setting, (c) smaller groups are easier to recruit, host, and manage, and (d) sharing in smaller groups is more comfortable for most participants. This approach is beneficial for this study because it captured the most current attitudes and beliefs of seasoned international teacher participants, will take a short time to administer and analyze, and informed me of the best candidates for the qualitative study (Creswell, 2012).

Instrumentation

After the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Survey (Appendix E) was collected and compiled, a total of eight international teachers selected from the entire pre-K-12 international, overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools were invited to take part in one, 90-minute mini-focus group interview. I subsequently divided the group of eight participants into two groups of four for the mini-

focus group interviews. A convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was employed, based on the participating teachers' geographic location. Because more than eight volunteer participants met the initially established sample criteria from the web-based survey and confirmed their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews to me using email, a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was used to identify the final eight participants for the two mini-focus groups. Because the EARCOS region covers a large geographical territory, I selected a location and time zone to conduct the interviews at a time suitable to the interview participants' preference. For example, teachers in Thailand, Hong Kong, and Korea participated in interviews during the same time frame.

The advantage of using a focus group for this type of research is that the participants' demographics and experiences are similar (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Lankoski & Bjork, 2015). In this case, teachers working in the same school environment and sharing the information about the same topic would entitle them to be viable participants. Patton (as cited in Creswell, 2012, p. 206) stated that "…the standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are 'information rich.'" This confirms that the selected sample size and strategy should garner data that is information rich for this research.

Upon approvals from the IRB, executive director of EARCOS, EARCOS school superintendents and principals, and the completion of the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Survey (Appendix E), I contacted participants by email to confirm their willingness to take part in the secondary phase of the research. I took this measure

before collecting any data. I provided additional study information (Appendix F) and the consent form to the participants.

According to Willert (2012), effective leadership is vital to organizational success, and in schools, effective leaders must embrace the school improvement processes to help facilitate school growth. The EARCOS executive director's and EARCOS superintendents' approval of study participants is based on a collective leadership belief that any new information gathered from research can serve the best interests of student learning within these international schools (D. Krajczar, personal communication, April 02, 2016; G. Whiteman, personal communication, February 10, 2015). To develop a relationship of trust between the participants and the researcher, preliminary information will be emailed to the superintendents and school principals and disseminated to participants, outlining the nature of the study and its potential effect and benefit to international school teachers in EARCOS and other regions (Creswell, 2014).

A school web-based server was used to ensure confidentiality of the collected survey data. Participants were also made aware of the following: (a) that their contribution is important to assist in the development of the body of research on teacher attrition in international schools, (b) of my background in international education, (c) that their participation is strictly voluntary, (d) that they will be audio and video-recorded to protect the integrity of the data, and (e) that they will not receive any compensation for their participation. Once participants were identified and confirmed, their participation in the study, I began to establish a collegial rapport with them. I made initial contact with participants through a Skype exchange call to confirm the date and time for the interviews. During these calls, I also encouraged the participants to ask any questions

relating to the study or my doctoral research. Establishing a good rapport with the participant set a good tone for the focus group interviews.

I do not have any known connection to any of the participants; therefore, there is no known researcher-participant bias. Following IRB research ethics and protocols, I made every attempt to minimize risks to the participants: (a) protecting their privacy through the use of pseudonyms during the data collection, analysis, and reporting process, (b) guarding against coercion by allowing for voluntary participation in the study and through appropriate measures for obtaining field data, (c) by reducing the potential effect of the teachers' job security by conducting interviews in a neutral setting, away from the school environment, and (d) ensuring that strict protocols existed during the data collection and analysis process.

I provided the participants with a copy of the consent form, along with an explanation of the study, and its benefits and risks. Adhering to proper research protocols as designated by Creswell (2012, 2014), I will store all copies of the consent and confidentiality forms, original data, field notes, transcripts, audio and video recordings, and all other research-related files in a secure location, such as a password-protected hard drive. At the completion of my doctoral study, all data that could potentially identify participants or the school will be deleted by me.

Protection of Research Study Participants

Strict codes and ethical standards are necessary to ensure that the rights of individual subjects and institutions involved in research study data collection, analysis, and publication processes are addressed, and every attempt is made to minimize the potential threats to them (Williams, 2012). The IRB has a responsibility to ensure that

institutions that are involved in research studies comply with university and federal laws (Walden, n. d.). Compliance with these safeguards and high standards of ethical conduct will enable universities to protect their reputation; at the same time, it protects the rights of the researchers, the subjects involved in their studies, and the employers and employing institution of the research participants. In addition, these strict protocols will enhance the credibility of the research (Lyle, 2010).

In this research study, I drew from qualitative information from international teachers to addresses the problem of teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools. I obtained comprehensive field data from a total of eight international teachers selected from the entire pre-K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools. These teachers were invited to take part in one mini-focus group interview involving four participants in each group. I conducted the 90-minute interview in a neutral location preselected by the participants and through email communication with me. This design enabled me to get close to the participants to gain insights and a deeper understanding of their perceptions in a real-life context. Focus group interviews can also generate a substantial quantity of information in a relatively short time frame, as opposed to other data collection strategies (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Lankoski & Bjork, 2015; Lyle, 2010).

The IRB may be interested in reviewing this research proposal for several reasons. Three of the main areas of interest may be the following: (a) equitable subject selection, (b) risks and benefits, and (c) procedures for maintaining subject confidentiality. The IRB also needed to know the specific methods that I used to select

participants. I follwed the correct measures to protect participants against equitable subject selection because I only chose eight international teachers.

For this study, a purposeful homogenous sampling strategy was used to select eight international teachers from the entire pre-K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools. I subsequently divided the group of eight participants into two groups of four for the mini-focus group interviews. To divide the groups, a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was employed, based on the participating teachers' geographic location and availability. Each group of four was then involved in one 90-minute mini-focus group interview. More than eight volunteer participants met the initially established sample criteria from the web-based survey and confirmation of their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews. Therefore, a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was employed to identify the final eight participants for the two mini-focus groups.

The risks and benefits to the participants were also clear in the design, including time commitment, the use of data, and implications of the study. I did not note any foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study. This research can be used in multiple ways that will lead towards improvement in student learning, such as insights for education boards and policy makers that will assist them in creating strategies to reduce teacher turnover or to contribute to the existing quantitative and qualitative research base that could pave the path for potential further exploration and investigation of teachers' personal and professional perspectives on teacher turnover and retention in international schools.

Finally, because the reputation of member schools in EARCOS and teachers' job security is important, it is vital to protect participants' anonymity and maintain subject confidentiality. I maintained and protected the participants' personal and professional privacy using pseudonyms to prevent data from being linked to schools or participants, in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. Results of this study will be made available for participants and schools involved in the research only in the form of disaggregated, anonymous data.

Although ensuring total confidentiality in research studies is never an absolute guarantee, researchers do have the responsibility to take the necessary precautions and steps to protect the integrity of their research at all levels (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam, 2009). For the mini-focus group interviews involved in this research, I minimized the confidentiality breaches by establishing preliminary ground rules with the participants. First, the focus group interviews were conducted in a private environment to ensure that persons outside the group could not identify them as being a group participant. A verbal presentation of all aspects of the study was delivered prior to the data collection and at the start of the mini-focus group interviews emphasizing the following: (a) confidentiality, (b) the reasons behind the importance of not disclosing what is discussed outside of the focus group, and (c) the notion of respecting individuals' personal contributions to the group interviews. Also, I also anonymized all data obtained from the group. Finally, all participants agreed to participate in the study by clicking on the link provided at the top of the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Survey (Appendix E) and by electronically digitizing the Email Confirmation of Mini-Focus Group Participation (Appendix F) and the consent form. All originals and copies of

consent and confidentiality forms, original and copies of data, transcripts and field notes, audio and video recordings, and all other research-related files will be stored in a secure location on my password-protected hard drive. Five years after the completion of the doctoral study, all data that could potentially identify participants or schools involved in the research study will be permanently deleted.

Data Collection

Researchers using a qualitative case study approach can select from multiple means to collect data and supplement their research, which range from field observations and interviews to the collection of documents and audiovisual materials, as presented by Creswell (2012) and Lodico et al. (2010). To obtain a greater in-depth explanation of international teachers' perspectives on high teacher turnover, teachers' perceptions of the result of high teacher turnover, and teachers suggested strategies that combat high teacher turnover. Comprehensive field data was collected solely by me using focus group interviews. I was the sole facilitator of all phases of the research except for the initial distribution of the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Surveys (Appendix F), which was conducted voluntarily by the superintendents and principals of the 149 EARCOS member schools.

To begin the data collection process, the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Surveys (Appendix E) were distributed by EARCOS superintendents to all EARCOS schools' principals, who then disseminated the survey information to their schools' respective international overseas-hire teachers via their schools' secure web-based servers. Completed information was then submitted directly to me by the designated deadline. After I obtained the participant data list from this survey, only the

selected study participants were contacted by me and provided with further information about the study and the focus group interview process.

I employed a purposeful homogenous sampling strategy to select a total of eight international teachers from the entire pre-K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools. I subsequently divided the group of eight participants into two groups of four for the mini-focus group interviews. A convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was employed, based on the participating teachers' geographic location and availability. Each group of four was involved in one 90-minute mini-focus group interview that was conducted by me.

I gave the interview participants the freedom to select the environment that was most suitable, private, and conducive for them to interview in. All participants chose to interview from their home. The mini-focus groups were grouped according to their geographic time zone location and availability to interview. For example, one focus group interview involved teachers from Thailand and Korea. I minimized the confidentiality breaches by establishing preliminary ground rules with the participants: (a) conducting the focus group interviews in a private environment to ensure that persons outside the group cannot identify them as being a group participant, (b) a verbal presentation of all aspects of the study delivered to the participants at the beginning of the interviews, emphasizing confidentiality, stressing the reasons behind the importance of not disclosing what is discussed outside of the focus group, and the respect of individuals' personal contributions to the research study, (c) anonymizing all data obtained from the group interviews, and (d) having the focus group participants read and sign the consent form.

I used self-developed semi-structured interview questions (Appendix G) that addressed the research questions and conformed to a conceptual framework for the study. The questioning strategies used in the mini-focus groups (research questions and sub questions) allowed for greater flexibility to probe beyond structured focus group interview protocols.

For this data collection methodology, focus groups were the best choice because the procedures used helped me obtain information from participants that identified their personal perceptions and experiences with teacher turnover. In this study, I conducted audio-taped Skype conference call interviews with the focus group participants. This technique inherently enabled me to gain firsthand insights into participants' responses and behaviors during the session. This observation and interaction in a social context during the data collection process is a hallmark of using focus groups to collect data (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Lankoski & Bjork, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2014) confirmed that alternative data collection methods would not enable me to obtain such rich, descriptive, and informative data, such as data obtained from observations or documents where the researcher is a non-participant and removed from personal interactions during the data collection process.

Creswell (2014) and Lodico et al. (2010) indicated that there are numerous means with which to record interview data. For this study, I used audio recordings supplemented with descriptive and reflective written field notes to record information conveyed by participants during the focus group interviews. All audio data information obtained was transcribed verbatim using a standardized transcription protocol; this took the form of a narrative script. I used Microsoft Office 10 voice activation software for this task and

added pseudonym code names for each participant. I saved all data files for this study as Microsoft Word documents.

The reflective notes taken during the raw data collections assisted me with the initial preliminary coding, the subsequent development of categories and sub-categories, and eventually in the building of dominating themes (Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010). A final review of the audiotape after transcription and preliminary coding enabled me to review the interviews again to ensure the accuracy of understanding and affirm a more accurate interpretation of the information presented by participants.

Data Analysis

Once the data was thoughtfully collected and organized, I analyzed the data searching for participants' meaning to identify trends, concepts, and themes (Lodico et al., 2010). Analyzing qualitative data involved making sense of gathered information that will enable me to answer the research question. Creswell (2012) and Lodico et al. (2010) documented the six steps in the data analysis process: (a) organizing data, (b) coding data, (c) forming themes, (d) reporting findings, (e) interpreting findings, and (f) validating findings. For this research, data analysis took place concurrently and immediately following each focus group interview to ensure that information was fresh in my mind. Both mini-focus group interview sessions took place within the same week.

With a relatively small database of fewer than 100 single-spaced pages of transcript data, I employed a hand analysis to sort and decode the data. Campbell, Quincey, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) confirmed that qualitative research projects with interviews averaging 90 minutes in length typically generate transcripts of between 20 and 30 single-spaced pages long. Creswell (2012) maintained that, during a

preliminary exploratory review of the data, it is important for the researcher to make initial notes of first impressions, which may include some self-reflective questions about the participants' message. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) referred to this as the cut and paste technique, which allows the researcher to conduct a quick analysis of the transcript and identify sections that are most relevant to the research questions. I then conducted a further review of the recorded field notes, logs of emerging understandings, and ongoing personal reflections for continued coding and analysis.

Using a process identified by Rubin and Rubin (2005), I read the transcript several times, each time identifying and highlighting relevant codes, categories, and eventual themes. In subsequent readings, lean coding, *in vivo* coding, and color coding related text helped me organize data to begin forming emerging categories and subsequent themes: (a) factors that contribute to high teacher turnover (red), (b) result of high teacher turnover (blue), and (c) steps to reduce high teacher turnover (green). Within each of the categories, color-coding sub-categories further coding was used, with alternate shades of the same color, different colors, numerals, and shapes. This strategy assisted me in determining repetition of certain data or identify discrepant data. I typed all data on word document spreadsheets for easier pattern recognition.

Data Validation

Ensuring the accuracy, authenticity, and credibility of the findings from the data collection and analysis are of paramount importance for the researcher, participant, and prospective beneficiaries of the study (Creswell, 2009). Procedurally, Creswell (2012, 2014); Lincoln and Guba (1985); Lodico et al., (2010); and Merriam (2009) indicated that there are multiple validity strategies that researchers can use to check the accuracy of

research findings to ensure that the truthful representation of the reality of the research participants is conveyed, including the use of external auditors, presenting negative or discrepant information, spending prolonged time in the research field, clarifier research bias, member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Although these are viable methods to add credibility to the study, spending prolonged time in the research field was not selected. Spending additional time in the field was not a feasible option due to time and distance constraints, and the nature of the setting was not necessarily applicable to the data.

Although member checking is one common strategy used to ensure the credibility of a study according to Merriam (2009), Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that a potential drawback of employing member checking may result in potential bias from subsequent participant re-visitations to the report. This bias may occur when participants synthesize the reflections of what other participants shared in the interviews and subsequently combine this with their self-reflections, in the time frame between the interviews and the report re-visitation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure the reliability of the coding schemes, verify interpretations, validate findings, and add validity and credibility to the research, I presented negative or discrepant information that contradicted themes that emerged and identified, reflected on, and clarified researcher bias in the narrative account by using peer debriefing, member checking, triangulation, and external auditing strategies. Doctoral study peers from fall 2015, spring and fall 2016, and spring 2017 Walden University EDUC 8090 courses and employment colleagues from international schools where I worked, who were familiar with the study to some degree were used in a debriefing and triangulation capacity to

enhance accuracy. These reviews were conducted mainly on the validation section of my report. Their feedback centered mainly on content and this meaningful qualitative and substantive discussion provided an opportunity for professional collaboration and dialogue with other educators that contributed toward my final draft product. I also shared other sections of the report with Walden University course and international school employment colleagues throughout the data collection and analysis phases. I used peer debriefers (employment colleagues) to analyze the data collected from focus group interviews independently, and then compare the findings. These colleagues included a history teacher, an English teacher, and a student admissions officer. Patton (2002) described triangulating data as "…having two or more persons independently analyzing the same qualitative data and compare their findings…" (p. 560). As it relates to this research, Creswell (2012) implied that if themes can be established based on evidence from several previous empirical research studies combined with collective perspectives obtained from the mini-focus group participants, then this convergence of the sources can add credibility to the study.

A final measure to enhance study validity involved commissioning an external auditor. According to Creswell (2014), an external auditor is an individual who is an expert in the field of research and possesses the qualifications to provide an objective assessment like those of a peer debriefer. The value of having an independent investigator review the data and provide external interpretations enhances study validity (Creswell, 2014). The auditor used for this study, for verifying and validating the analysis, is an academic familiar with doctoral level research and is an experienced international educator well-versed in the demographic and transient nature of international school

communities. Dr. Mancuso, currently a superintendent of an overseas international school in South America, conducted his doctoral research using a quantitative research design strategy that focused on the factors associated with teacher turnover in American overseas international schools.

The external auditor received the verbatim transcripts from the two mini-focus group interviews along with my analysis of the data collected. The auditor was asked to review this information and compare and validate this with my analysis. All information provided was kept strictly confidential and was only used for this doctoral study project. Creswell (2012) supported this type of strategy by indicating that using non-affiliated parties to help critique the procedures used by the researchers, as well as locate omissions, biases, interpretations and explanations, and examine judgments, is a good method for validating my position and increase the credibility of a study.

The data validation procedures for this study involved conducting a preliminary analysis of the data. The next stage involved a comparison of my analysis with that conducted by the external auditors. A discussion provision was made available for clarification on a need basis. The overall validity of the study is enhanced by using this level of data analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Assumptions

In this study, I examined three elements related to high teacher turnover from international teachers in EARCOS member schools: (a) the perceptions of factors that contribute to high teacher turnover rates in international schools, (b) perceptions of what international teachers' believe are implications of high teacher turnover on international school communities, and (c) perceptions about what international teachers believe are

potential steps that can be taken by schools to reduce high turnover rates of international teachers in international schools. I was the sole facilitator of the entire research project. A single instrument qualitative case study research design methodology was employed.

I used a purposeful homogenous sampling strategy to select a total of eight international teachers selected from the entire pre-K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS member schools. I subsequently divided the group of eight participants into two groups of four for the mini-focus group interviews. A convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy was employed, based on the participating teachers' geographic location and availability. Each group of four was then involved in one 90-minute mini-focus group interview that was conducted solely by me. More than eight volunteer participants met the initially established sample criteria from the web-based survey and confirmed their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews. However, through email, I used a convenience sampling strategy followed by a simple random sampling strategy to identify the final eight participants for the two mini-focus groups. Collected data was subsequently analyzed to determine categories and themes. To enhance study credibility, I commissioned an external auditor to review the project. The auditors' views were very similar to mine on all accounts, with only minor variations in viewpoints that did not detract from my final analysis.

I made the following assumptions about this study: (a) even though I was the sole facilitator of the entire project, research bias could be minimized based on a review by an external auditor, (b) a qualitative case-study research method was the best choice for examining the perceptions of international teachers in schools with high teacher turnover

rates in member schools in EARCOS, (c) the sampling strategies used in this research yielded the best data for this type of study, (d) I had equal access to all eligible participants, regardless of geographical constraints for me or the participants, (e) EARCOS superintendents and principals diligently administered and oversaw survey distribution to all potentially eligible international overseas-hire teachers, (f) surveys were answered honestly by the participants, (g) the sample criterion was a true reflection of the diverse experiences of international teachers, (h) responses by participants in the focus groups interviews fittingly answer the research questions, and (i) the external auditors analytical views aligned with mine.

Findings

This section begins with an overview of the purpose of the study and the methodology and conclude with an analysis and summary of the data collected. This outline follows the research questions presented in earlier sections of this dissertation. Using purposeful homogenous, convenience, and random sampling strategies, I examined the perceptions of eight international overseas-hire teachers employed in EARCOS for several reasons: to determine what these teachers believe to have caused high teacher turnover in international schools, to gather information about what international teachers believe are implications of high turnover on international school communities, and, finally, to gain insights about what international teachers believe are potential steps to reduce high attrition rates of international teachers in international schools. Information provided by participants came from specific responses to the lead questions for each section identified below, in addition to the guiding sub-questions drawn from Appendix

G. All participants responded to all main and secondary questions asked during the mini-focus group interview sessions.

Perceived Causes of High International Teacher Turnover in International Schools

In this section, research question 1 is addressed: "What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools?"

One of the initial factors presented by interview participants when new teachers transition into a new country and culture is that of a need for mentoring. Mentorship plays an integral role and is a huge factor that enables new teachers to effectively adapt to cultural transitions on a personal and professional level. Participant C commented, "We have been very impressed with the amount of mentoring, member care and support we have received in coming here." Participant D added, "… here's your apartment, it's furnished, here's this, here's that. That might be part of why my transition was much easier here."

Participants who were assigned a mentor or had one available to them helped them and provided them with a sense of comfort knowing that they were not being left alone. The five participants that were assigned a mentor in the different schools in which they worked indicated that it was a great strength of the participating school and that having an assigned mentor added value to their experience. During the varying one to two week orientation sessions the mission, vison, and culture of the school were strategically infused into the mentorship experience. Participant C conveyed, "I do believe that first impressions in that nature are helpful to get us settled and then put the idea in our mind that this is a place we want to stay longer." For beginning teachers, this

identified emotional support system and positive guidance enabled teachers to "land well."

In schools where a mentorship program did not exist or was limited in its capacity to meet the needs of teachers, this presented a weakness of the school. Because of this limitation, foundational information communicated to beginning teachers was sporadic and "perceived" as unintentional. This did not lend itself to a smooth cultural or new school transition and did not help to facilitate new teachers' professional growth and development. Several participants indicated that their lack of support for new teacher mentoring contributed to their lack of being valued and their uneasiness in their professional competence. Because of new teachers not being adequately supported, they became frustrated when the expected supports did not meet their needs. Identified supports included the following: personal local accommodations such as banking, access knowledge to food and meat markets, and transportation arrangements and professional related needs such as program planning, teaching strategies, student assessments, and material procurement. Participant A commented, "…the people that were supposed to help me get integrated into my job did not do a very good job at all and as a result, this has been a rough transition for me." Participant B shared that, "…there was some relocation help but was very limited. There was no one to help me." The perceived lack of "effective mentoring" support most often led teachers to alternative means for support, including asking colleagues for assistance or solving problems on their own.

Additional factors weighing into to teachers' decisions to remain in their current international school connected to interpersonal relationships with colleagues, student demographics, personal factors, and the salary and benefits packages. After the settling in

period and as teachers become acclimatized to their school environment they establish and further develop their personal and professional relationships. The formation of significant, supportive, fruitful relationships is a strong determinant for teachers' longevity in an international school setting. One participant shared that, "…when there is a conducive, supportive, and encouraging environment that's great… if there's local politics or if there's power plays, that's going to be a negative." Only one participant indicated that they experienced only one challenging situation related to interpersonal conflicts in any of their school environments. Although this situation was not pleasant, it was not the single determining factor that led to changing employment locations.

Student demographics played an insignificant role in teachers' mobility. Participant A contributed, "We have 42/41 different nationalities. People just get along. It's true …where the kids come from, they're just kids." Participant C added, "I would say from my perspective; the demographics are not the most important factor about staying or leaving."

Teachers' personal factors were drawn from participants' experiences and from considerations that they shared with other teachers. Examples of personal factors identified by participants include those that affect their lives predominantly outside of school. Examples of these may include; air quality, living conditions, personal safety, and personal family crises.

Pollution is a factor; however, people can tolerate it for a short term if a positive school environment outweighs the air quality standard. Participant B indicated the following:

Two years ago, when the pollution was quite high, I remember the director when he went recruiting told us that when he came back from the recruitment fair, people asked him about the pollution. People still came.

Another participant added, "…that's one of the reasons that I left. I enjoy long distance running, but I did not enjoy it there."

Participant R revealed that even though his wife was robbed at knifepoint in the middle of the day in their first month, they did finish their 2-year term and that was not the reason for not renewing or extending their contract. They simply took some precautionary measures from that day forward. Participant B communicated that "…he knew a young lady teacher in Honduras was robbed four times in one year." Although these could have been factors that contributed to teachers moving, these did not appear to be significant enough to sway or discouraged them from moving.

International teachers occupy different places on their professional development and knowledge base spectrum. More than half of the participants were encouraged by the amount of professional development and continuous learning opportunities afforded to them by their employers. Participant D responded to the professional development opportunities by sharing that, "…it is nice and you have a lot of freedom in how you use it. "Participant E conveyed, "Personally I'd say that's had a huge impact on the opportunities for decisions to stay or to go. I've been very lucky with my professional development, and that's contributed to my longer stays at schools." Participant D added the following:

My current school has excellent, just stellar, professional development opportunities for people. The benefits are excellent. I think for several our staff,

that has enticed them to stay. I've started specializing in some areas that I normally haven't because of good advice from a curriculum coordinator and because of the school being extremely supportive in helping us to get the courses that we need. My previous school, not as much.

Recruiters have a tendency to portray and market their school and attract and retain the best teachers, and the salary and benefits package are an integral part of their campaign (Prevot, 2016). However, according to participants interviewed, the compensatory package is secondary to other important considerations. Initially, the package may be an attractant to entice teachers to be attracted to a school, but it is rare for participants to use this as their determining factor for them to leave a school. Participant E imparted the following:

I don't think it plays a big role in people staying. I rarely see people saying, "I have to leave because I need to earn more." It's more of an initial factor. Unless a country you go to is wildly more expensive than you realized. I've never heard of people leaving because of salary.

Participant F described the following:

The more important factors include the message about a schools' mission and vision and the positive reports about the schools. I'm going to agree that it is an issue, but at my school we have low salaries and good benefits. It's important for us to talk about mission and vision of the school so that we hire teachers that are committed to the school because of a fit with mission and vision. Because we're not going to attract them by a high salary.

There is one final point worth mentioning. Because not all countries have the same cost of living, an important consideration for teachers to be aware of is to ensure that they ask the right questions of recruiters that will enable them to have a clearer indication of what the purchasing power of their salary and benefits will be before they commit to a contract.

The final two most important factors that participants identified as contributing to international teacher turnover linked to administrative leadership support and the effectiveness of school systems that support teacher growth and development and individual school sustainability. Components of these include; administrative support at the site level, communication and transparency, teacher workloads, autonomy, professional development, and professionalism. Components of these administrative supports need to work in harmony within effective school systems. Effective schools managed and maintained all facets of these components while ineffective schools struggled, resulting in an adverse effect on staff moral and subsequently teacher turnover.

Participants transmitted that most teachers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction was related to workplace stressors, which are realities, and that they will always endure some stressors in the workplace. They went on to imply that these stressors leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be minimized through intentional administrative support mechanisms related to effective, transparent communication of the school's mission and vision and of their teachers' expectations. The perception of a supportive administration and conversely non-supportive administration can be central to teachers' decisions to remain or leave their current assignment.

The importance of workload, autonomy, and professionalism in international schools also weighed heavily in the conversations related to job satisfaction. Five participants share that workload is a consideration, but not the most important one if good quality systems are in place in schools. Participant D indicated that "…when I finally left the international school that I was at for seven years, that was my deciding factors in selecting a school…" Participant D added the following:

Obviously, things change, schools grow, schools get smaller, and teachers have to be flexible, but I'm lucky to work with a lot of extremely hard-working teachers. If there are good systems in place, the workload changes. It's when there are no systems in place and a heavy workload, that's when it becomes unmanageable.

Participant F shared the following:

It's a factor at our school but not a large factor because I believe in our secondary at least that we traditionally have had a lower workload than most other schools… it's hard to complain because I'm bringing them up to what might be the average at most other schools.

Participant E indicated the following:

… the teaching load would not even rank in the top five. I think the mission, the culture of the school, the systems in place, the support, the opportunities for growth, the opportunities for creativity and autonomy would outweigh those things. I'm just thinking now about the three international schools I've been at.

Participant D revealed that, "…the biggest thing that makes me want to stay at a school is partially to be treated like a professional. I've worked in environments where I

felt that I was sort of micro-managed to death and that I haven't been teaching for a long time." Participant A stated the following:

Autonomy is huge. You hired me to do a job and if you don't give me the freedom to do my job why did you hire me? The same participant added that, "When there was a problem … I wasn't given the freedom to address those problems and wasn't given a voice and that has been a big problem for me and this past year … this is completely the opposite to my previous teaching experiences.

Participant F conversed the following:

…there's a goal to allow teachers to have the type of autonomy that encourages them to be innovative and to take risks and do things which can take advantage of new technologies and the things that are not standardized at the school. It's also important to have a certain amount of systems in place to support all teachers so that once those systems are in place.

Participant D added his thoughts:

Things are improving. At the same time, I feel like I have autonomy but I think that was not always the case. With prior administrations, there was so much autonomy that there was not always teaching and learning going on as result of it. Maybe if you do have good systems that are there to support teachers to be creative and to be innovative that's good.

Participant E agreed.

… one of the key factors for keeping people through having those systems and a clear understanding and a common approach is having a low turnover in the leadership team. By having that low turnover, assuming you've got a good team,

you have that experience and that consistency and you're not changing every two or three years. By having that consistent approach, that culture can grow and then two other things can happen. One of them is that at the point of recruitment; it's a very clear message about 'this is the type of autonomy you will have within this construct, here are the parameters of your autonomy because this is what we believe in, this is our approach, and beyond that you have a lot of autonomy'. The second one would be the part of systems for what some schools would call appraisal or professional growth evaluation, and for that also to be 'as we were talking about before' very transparent and supportive so that we're all moving in a common direction.

Interview participants provided personal accounts of their experiences with current and former administrators and how these affected their working conditions and employment decisions. Participant D shared that, "…compared to the previous administrator, the current one is very direct, very transparent, and just in putting in systems that we needed drastically." Two participants agreed that they have always maintained a very amiable relationship with their administrative supervisors and that their support was always professional and trusting and that their administrative colleagues demonstrated a willingness to be open to new ideas and provide supports with curricular or parental concerns.

Other participants shared opposing views of support mechanisms. One participant expressed that their supervisor was demeaning, communicated in an evasive manner, and did not exude a very trusting disposition. Participant A imparted that, "…whereas here I felt very micro managed and untrusted so that's been hard." Participant D spoke, "Admin,

that's all I'm going to say. Sorry, but it's a trickle-down of the worst kind and that's been the case in international schools. It's a lack of leadership and that usually is the primary factor." Other participants agreed that where there is not a lot of transparency friction results, and that leads to a decline in staff morale.

Although these are two contrasting scenarios, it is believed that strong administrative support is vital to the success or lack of success of a school and the effect that it has on school morale. These relationships affect colleagues both at a personal and professional level. All participants agreed that a supportive administrator and the forging of strong relationships between staff, that is built on trust, is pivotal to teacher job satisfaction.

Implications of High International Teacher Turnover on International Schools

In this section, research question 2 is addressed: "What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?"

Teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school have a lasting effect on the school community as was generalized by participants. Some of these outcomes are positive; in contrast, other effects produce less than desirable results. Participants have identified three main implications of high teacher turnover in international schools; a detrimental effect on school climate, a lack of continuity in school programming, and mistrust by students. Additional minor effects included the negative, significant costs associated with replacing outgoing teachers and the positive, generation of new ideas.

One of the immediate results of staff departures is noticeable in the climate shift and the morale of staff. This is evident because teachers in international circuits are

required to give their notice very early in the school year, as early as October of the current school year. Therefore it is quite common, at this time of year, for rumors and questions relating to turnover to begin to surface. This percolation occurs in all schools but is more prevalent in schools that traditionally have higher than normal turnover rates. Participant R made a suggestion.

> When teachers have to go back home, retire, or things such as that, just going back to re-patriate, that's one reason. The other one is they leave on bad terms, and there's maybe a difference there in the morale when teachers leave for different circumstances, say positive or less than positive.

> Participant D conveyed her thoughts:

> If quality people are coming in that are like-minded and have the same goals, I'm always excited. When there's a lot of turnover, I've seen various departments in my current school where because there's been so much turnover, it's a weak department, they know it's a weak department, and people keep going because it's hard for them to establish curriculum and you can see where the kids suffer. We have a lot of issues specifically in our … department. Our head left, a new head came in and it wasn't a good fit. Then other experienced people left and you can see the result in our student learning. It's very apparent that it's not a functioning team. That is because of how many people have come and gone. They never really established that foundation as a department.

> Participant R indicated that "it is hard to stay motivated and positive when you are in a constant rebuilding phase, isn't it?"

> Participant E shared the following:

…that's just part of the cycle of bringing in new exciting ideas … you want some turnover on the one hand because you don't want to become stagnant, but on the other hand you don't want it to be so high that you lose that institutional knowledge and lose that culture that takes a couple of years to develop.

Participant B shared an opposite view by stating, "That's a good point. The way I responded was more of me looking at turnover from a negative result of teacher turnover." Participant E replied with, "The amount of turnover is key because you're always going to have turnover.

Aside from the staff morale being affected by turnover, students almost always bear the brunt of teacher transition. Participant A indicated the following:

I would say that one of the big problems is a lack of continuity. Usually, everybody's probably thought they've got a good idea but then someone else has a good idea, but that person is long gone. That person created something but nobody knows what it is or the people who do walk out the door and then the new people that come in have no idea how to even do it or what they're supposed to do. Continuity in curriculum, in admin, dealing with parents, dealing with students, I would say the whole gambit of an international school. When people walk out of that door they're always taking something with them; whether it's a skill set, knowledge, or how-to, whatever it may be. It can sometimes be replaced but sometimes in some places it is never replaced.

Participant A shared the following:

I would say there is a definite mistrust of the students mistrusting the teachers when they're not sure how long that teacher is going to stay. "…teachers only

stayed for one year. The students really did not open up much to those teachers. They tended to mistreat those teachers and almost push them away because they were testing them to see if they would stay or not. Now the second year we were there, there was a noticeable improvement in the attitudes of the students towards us, and by the end of the fifth year, we were one of the very few teachers that were still there. We had a good rapport with the students. That's just one of the things I noticed, that when there is a lot of teacher turnover, the students just dismissed the teacher, especially that first year.

Participant R responded, "Sounds like you're talking about relationships." Participant C replied:

Yeah, that's right. Respect, relationships, and as far as they're concerned. Yeah, the teachers came for a job, they wanted an overseas experience, and they won't be here long. What's the sense of really sharing our lives with them? That's the feeling I got, my perception.

From an administrators' stance, the actual implied costs associated with replacing international teachers can be excessive. These are including financial cost factors plus the those associated with the development and forging of new relationships and replacing new teachers annually or semi-annually. Two participants implied that turnover is high because a lot of new teachers were just there because they could get a job, establish some marketability, stay for a short time, find a marriage partner and then usually leave. Participant C shared the following:

In other areas, there's a lot of families amongst the staff so there's a lot of stability. People have been here for a long time. What I'll say is that it undermines

the student body and undermines the well-being of the school when there's a very high turnover rate among teachers.

This turnover forces administrators to waste its resources on hiring and rehiring practices continually. Regardless of the turnover rates, school climate is always effected by turnover and there is a certain settling in the adjustment period for the new teachers, students, and the school community. Participant E shared that, "Even if you're new and there is a strong culture within the school, it takes a couple years to really feel like you are a member of that culture. It's that threshold that is key." Participant F added his thoughts:

> Even thinking about some of our new teachers this year, they're great additions to our staff and they help build the morale, and doing things the people previously in their positions were not doing. They're bringing new energy and vision and their experiences can be beneficial to a school.

Some school communities are in constant flux because of international teacher turnover. These teachers' decisions to change locations can have a positive or negative effect on the school communities. Based on evidence gathered from interviewed participants and the collective knowledge that they conveyed of their experiences, much what they shared implies that the effect that their transiency does not always result in positive experiences for the community that they have left.

Potential Steps to Reduce International Teachers Turnover in International Schools

In this section, research question 3 is addressed: "What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?"

Understanding the reasons behind teacher turnover and the effect turnover has on a school organization is foundational to developing strategies to reduce teacher turnover. This knowledge will equip and enable educational planners and policy developers with needed information to create potential solutions to this global problem. Participants identify related elements and strategies that could potentially be used to address this issue. These are organized into three main ideas that include; having good systems in place to create a strong culture where the mission and vison are aligned, improving overall school communication between to ensure transparency between all school community members, and hiring and retaining quality, like-minded individuals to ensure longevity and consistency.

Schools that have good systems in place refers to the ability of a school to effectively and efficiently operate. Participant A described the school:

I think that healthy systems in place where people can communicate and talk or just absolutely huge. This is the other thing too about international schools, this is your family, and when my job goes wrong, it's not just affecting me, it affects many other people.

In healthy systems, people make an investment in each other. Participant B articulated the following:

Just one thing comes to mind about a step to reduce turnover. Sometimes when teachers want to leave, the director steps in and says "Can you please stay?" And then some teachers do stay; they do another contract. I've had that happening a few times.

Alternately, when decisions are not in the best interested of students or teachers, this can hurt teachers' decision-making processes. Participant E uttered, "Teachers find it very frustrating when there's a lack of transparency and a lack of consistency, and all the hodgepodge of knee-jerk decisions when the mission should really be the final bottom line for decisions made within the school. Participant D described an experience:

Having spent a year that was very much in flux, I feel that things trickle down. And it really affected students as well. They know when their teachers are under duress. They may not know the reasons, but they know it.

To reduce international teacher turnover, Participant A suggested that, "… you should have a good, well-functioning board that is vetting decisions." This ought to ensure that the mission and vison are aligned and that there are like-minded individuals responsible for longevity and consistency. Participant E made further suggestions:

By having that consistent approach, that culture can grow … and would be part of systems for what some schools would call appraisal or professional growth evaluation, and for that also to be very transparent and supportive so that we're all moving in a common direction.

The next idea relates to the importance of improving a school communication to ensure that there is a clear understanding and that transparency occurs among all school community members. Participant C articulated the following:

I think that at least from my perspective, the single most important factor is the communication between the administrators or the senior teachers and the newer teachers. When there is a good, thoughtful communication flow and the systems

of the school are working well, that is a big plus, or a feeling that you really want to stay.

Participant A stated that," …I don't feel like I could go talk to my principal, and in fact every time I bring something to him, he's scared to death to talk to me about it." Participant B voiced that, "Originally I was going to say that if they increased the salary a little bit, people might stay. But I've changed my mind because yes, communication is important, but also the approachability of the management team." Participant C shared, "Well, I think that at least from my perspective, the single most important factor is the communication between the administrators or the senior teachers and the newer teachers.

Participant D asserted the following:

…. I've been very lucky that the departments that I have been involved in, people have come and people have gone, but I think part of the reason I stayed in the schools that I have been in is that employers have consistently hired good people, and people that are like-minded in the sense that they want to work collaboratively, that's what I'm looking for.

Two participants noted that in one of their experiences, 1-year contracts were the standard offer. This practice did not promote longevity and certainly did not necessarily entice teachers to stay or think long-term. Participant F describes like-mindedness as, "Having good opportunities for collaboration and teamwork, and not being isolated…" Participant echoed the sentiment:

One of the key factors for keeping people is through having a clear understanding and a common approach… and having a low turnover in the leadership team. By

having that low turnover, assuming you've got a good team, you have that experience and that consistency and you're not changing every 2 or 3 years.

<center>**Identified Themes**</center>

This section documents data from the mini-focus group interviews that were used to identify common patterns and themes related to the study. The research questions were used to gain perceptions and insights for each of the corresponding topics. I grouped the summary of the findings by the research questions that served as a guide for the study project, that ends with a presentation of the themes that emerged.

Question 1. "What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools?"

Based on experienced teachers' collective experiences and perceptions, they have identified several contributing factors that they perceive contribute or influence high international teacher turnover in the international where they worked. A summary of these main contributing factors and themes that emerged that influence teachers' decisions to remain or leave their school include mentorship opportunities, collegial relationships, student demographics, personal factors, salary and benefits packages, effectiveness of school systems, and administrative support. Although not all participants identified all factors with the same degree of importance, commonalities exist on top indicators. Administrative leadership support and the effectiveness of school systems that support teacher growth and development, and individual school sustainability are the main factors weighing into to teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and consequently the main contributors that lead to high teacher turnover in international schools.

Question 2. "What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?"

Teacher participants have identified these three main implications of high teacher turnover in international schools: a detrimental effect on school climate, a lack of continuity in school programming, and a mistrust of teachers by students. Additional minor effects that teachers have identified linked to results of high teacher turnover include both negative and positive implications. Perceived important negative repercussions associated with high teacher turnover were the financial costs and effect of human resource management of replacing outgoing teachers with new teachers. On a more positive note, the replacement of new teachers meant that schools have the potential to inherit new ideas brought in from the outside by the newly hired teachers entering the school.

Question 3. "What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?"

According to the teacher participants involved in this study and from information that they gleaned from their international education experiences, understanding the perceptions of the reasons that international teachers have for turnover and the effect that turnover has on a school organization is critical when examining potential steps that will reduce the high incidence of international teacher turnover. Study participants identified several related thematic elements and strategies that could potentially be used to address this issue. The main themes are the following: having good systems in place by using the school's mission and vison as a guide to create a strong culture where the mission and vison are aligned; improving overall school communication to ensure transparency

between all school community members; and using intentional hiring practices including specifically hiring and retaining high quality individuals to ensure consistency and longevity.

Before taking any action to reduce high turnover in international schools, a clear understanding of the causes and implications of high teacher turnover must be identified. According to the teacher participants involved in this study and from information obtained from the review of the literature, two foundational things must occur. First, an understanding of the main contributing factors that influence international teachers' decisions to remain or leave their school must happen. Secondly, an understanding of the potential negative effect that high teacher turnover may have on international schools needs to happen. Equipped with this combined knowledge, site managers, educational planners, and policy developers will be in a better position to create potential solutions to this local and even greater global problem.

Limitations

All studies present certain limitations for researchers. For this study, two types of limitations existed, those about methodological and researcher-orchestrated ones. Within each category, the research has identified a few of these potential limitations.

The first methodological limitation is related to the lack of relevant prior research conducted on the topic. The main reason I selected the specific topic and geographical region to conduct the study was because there is a lack of quantitative and qualitative research conducted on international teacher turnover in the EARCOS region. Citing prior research studies as the basis of the literature review and as a foundation for understanding the research problem has been challenging. The lack of available resources may not

necessarily affect the overall findings or conclusions of the study, but this may be an indicator that there is a greater need for further research on the topic in this region. Another related limitation is that of the sample size and the connection to the scope of the analysis. Because the analysis in the study depends on the type of research problem investigated, if the sample size is too small, it may be more difficult to obtain conclusive findings, although this is less relevant in qualitative research (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). However, a lack of reliable data will likely often limit the scope of the analysis because the size of the sample or it can be a significant obstacle in finding trends or meaningful relationships (Brutus et al., 2013; Creswell 2014).

The second type of limitation pertains to me. I did not have feasible access or limited access to all participants that may have met the specified criteria for this research. This qualitative study covers a huge geographical region that stretched from the northern part of the Asian continent to southern Africa to Europe and potentially could include teachers from any of these regions. Access to all EARCOS member international teachers who met the selected study criteria may have been impaired, given the scheduling calendars for both myself and the study participants. These included time zone variances, school vacation periods, the time of year, and quantity of participants. To account for these variances, I used a convenience sampling strategy for the selection of some of the participants. Like the methodological limitations, the drawback to using a different sampling strategy was the limitation in the scope of the analysis because a true sample of the eligible participants may not have been included (Brutus et al., 2013; Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010). Finally, another related limitation may be my inexperience with interviews and collecting this type of data, even though I followed the specific focus

group interview protocols. This consideration may have hindered the quality of data collected.

Conclusion

The methodology for this research identified and described in this section contains the following: the research design, approach used, the setting and population, instrumentation, ethical considerations, data analysis, data validation, assumptions, findings, identified themes, and study limitations. I employed a qualitative case-study research method. Perceptions of international overseas-hired teachers employed in EARCOS were examined to determine what these teachers believed to have caused high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools.

Research procedures included examining perceptions of experienced international overseas-hired teachers, using a self-developed semi-structured open-ended interview protocol that addressed specific questions and conformed to a specific conceptual framework for the research study. The questioning strategies in the mini-focus groups allowed for greater flexibility to probe beyond structured focus group interview protocols. The research focused on three specific areas and addressed these three main research questions:

1. Perceived causes of high international teacher turnover in international schools: What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools?

2. Implications of high international teacher turnover on international schools: What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?

3.Potential steps to reduce international teachers turnover in international schools:

What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe

should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?

The next section of this study includes a comprehensive and detailed description

and explanation of the research project. This includes the rationale, a brief overview of

the literature that pertains to the project, a detailed description, and evaluation plan, and

the implications that the project will have on social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The goals of my qualitative case study project were to investigate the perceptions that international overseas-hired teachers have regarding high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools and determine what these teachers believe is the result of high teacher turnover in these schools. I also tried to elicit steps that these teachers believe should be taken to reduce high teacher turnover and develop a plan that EARCOS member schools can potentially use to combat high international overseas-hire teacher turnover. Based on results from my study, I found a few main contributing factors that influence overseas-hire teacher turnover in the international schools. These include the following: effectiveness of school systems, administrative support, mentorship opportunities, collegial relationships, personal factors, and benefits packages.

Previous empirical studies revealed a range of push factors and pull factors that affect international teachers' decisions for leaving their employment posts (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Karsenti & Collins, 2013; Mancuso, 2010; Mancuso et al., 2011; Ozoglu, 2015). Although not all participating teachers identified contributing factors with the same degree of importance, commonalities of top indicators were evident. I identified administrative leadership support and the effectiveness of school systems that support teacher growth and development and individual school sustainability as the main influences weighing into to teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These, consequently, are the main contributors that I believe lead to high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools. I based this categorization of themes on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, which suggests that certain institutional

(workplace) factors (push factors and pull factors) are central in an individuals' job satisfaction, whereas other work-related elements can cause job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, these themes formed the foundation for the development of the project study, which focuses on providing information that will enable school administrators to determine teacher behavioral patterns and factors that influence teacher turnover. This will enable and equip administrators with useful information that will assist them in making more informed, solution-based staffing decisions. Gaining insights into better understanding teachers' motivation plays an integral role in teacher retention, and this understanding can lead toward more effective solutions that will reduce teacher turnover within international schools (Candle, 2010; Koech et al., 2014; Puangjakta & Vinitwatanakhun, 2015; Waititu, 2010).

Description and Goals

Because the primary mandate of EARCOS member schools is to continue to deliver high-quality education to its students consistently, researchers need to examine the issues surrounding high international overseas-hire teacher turnover critically. Mancuso (2010) and Wu (2012) indicated that if administrators do not address high international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates, the result will adversely influence curricular and program continuity, a negative shift or sustainability of school-wide initiatives, and a serious loss of the dynamic stability and continuity of the important relationships that exist among teachers, students, and school community partners. Therefore, if schools in the EARCOS organization acquire an enhanced understanding of the contributing factors that result in high international overseas-hire teacher turnover, they will be better equipped to develop and employ strategies to encourage these teachers

to remain. This, in turn, will maximize schools' investment in teachers and ultimately make contributions to improvements in student learning (Luscombe et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010).

The executive director of EARCOS and the EARCOS staff work hard to support research within the EARCOS region as it enhances the work that they do as a regional council. Upon completion of the doctoral study research project, in the form of a white paper, I will share a comprehensive summary of my research study's findings and present recommendations to EARCOS' leadership. The focus of my white paper presentation to EARCOS will emerge from my research and literature review. I will begin with a description of the perceived causes of high international overseas-hire teachers in international schools, followed by the possible implications of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover on international schools, and, finally, an outline of recommended measures that can be taken to reduce international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools.

Administrators from EARCOS member schools, other international schools, and school systems around the globe can use this information to make more informed decisions on how to proactively effect change and address the problem of high turnover rates that their schools may be experiencing. This ultimately can contribute to improved student learning (Wood, 2014). In addition, because limited empirical data are available on international teacher turnover in EARCOS, this research study project can supplement the existing research base on international teacher turnover and lay the foundation for potential further exploration and investigation of international teachers' professional perspectives on teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools.

Rationale

An important and continuous issue that adversely affects international schools is that of overseas-hire teacher turnover (Martinez et al., 2010; Wu, 2012). When international teacher turnover rates soar to unhealthy ranges, out of necessity and prevention, leadership in EARCOS schools need to consider addressing these high turnover rates (Cambridge, 2002; Mancuso, 2010; Wu, 2012). Luscombe et al. (2013); Mancuso et al. (2010); and Roberts et al. (2010) added that school leadership ought to make it a priority to devote their resources to develop a system that will enable them to understand the predictors of teacher turnover better.

This project is important because of independent international educational institutions, such as those in the EARCOS, annually invest phenomenal amounts of human and capital resources into recruiting, training, and retaining new teachers, and when these teachers choose to leave, it places a heavy burden on these schools (Gilbert, 2011). This constant turnover of teachers adversely affects and compromises student learning, the quality of education for its students, school programming, and the ethos of school communities (Mancuso et al., 2010; Petty et al., 2012).

Considering the themes that surfaced from the information provided by international overseas-hire EARCOS teachers of the perceived problems and challenges associated with teacher turnover, and the literature in general, there was a need to address how international school systems can plan to reduce international overseas-hire teacher turnover. A project designed to provide international school leadership with strategies to enhance the personal and professional experiences for teachers (pull factors) and reduce the (push factors) will potentially increase teachers' likelihood to commit to staying for a

longer term in an international school. This type of project can complement the existing knowledge on international overseas-hire teacher turnover with the primary goal of improving student learning. In addition, this type of positive social change project study research can also affect other spinoff industries within school communities, such as medicine, law, and engineering, thereby influencing the enrollment longevity of parent professionals employed in these school communities (D. Musco, personal communication, April 28, 2016).

Review of the Literature

The empirical, theoretical, and historical literature that I reviewed here is relevant and relates directly to the issues surrounding high overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools. Some of the areas explored included the following: teacher turnover and retention, teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, determinants of teacher mobility, personal and professional experiences of overseas teachers in international schools, and institutional factors associated with teacher turnover. I chose these topics because elements revealed with each of them linked to possible causes of high overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools.

The databases that I used to gather information included the following: journals and conference papers, peer-reviewed research investigations, doctoral dissertations and master's theses, scholarly journal articles, working papers, and books found in ERIC, EBSCO host, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Thoreau, and Walden University's library. Additional sources included communications involving Walden University professors and library staff and through feedback provided by colleagues using the Discussion Post in the Walden University doctoral program courses. Key terminology used for searches

included phrases such as the following: international teacher, overseas-hire, teacher attrition, teacher turnover, teacher job satisfaction, teacher job dissatisfaction, determinants of teacher mobility, pull factors, push factors, administrative support, school climate, why do teachers leave, teacher induction, teacher mentoring, teacher autonomy, turnover costs, job stressors, student achievement, and teacher stayers, leavers, and movers. Through researching these phrases and terms I examined relevant, current research approaches used related to issues, practices, perceptions, and trends surrounding high overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools and the results of such turnover. This included implications including the adverse influence on program continuity, a lack of sustainability of school-wide initiatives, and losses in the dynamic stability and continuity of the important relationships that exist between teachers, students, and various school community partners. An enhanced knowledge of these terms, contributors, and motivations of teachers enabled me to have a more thorough understanding of the issues surrounding teacher turnover and allowed me to develop and employ strategies that can be used to encourage these overseas hire teachers to remain in their schools. I presented the review of literature in the order of conceptual framework, perspectives of the international teacher, factors that influence international teachers' employment decisions, and the effect of teacher turnover on international schools.

Conceptual Framework

I used the Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as the lens to guide the development of this project because the design of international schools attracts different types of teachers than non-international schools and because workplace factors are the main contributors to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that lead to the high incidence of

overseas hire teacher turnover in international schools (Barbieri et al., 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2012). Although these international teacher populations are usually specialists in their area of expertise they also tend to be quite mobile (Mancuso, 2010). Herzberg el al. (1959) and Herzberg (2014) indicated that workplace factors are the main contributor toward teachers' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that lead to the high incidence of overseas hire teacher turnover in international schools. Maslow (1943) indicated that these workplace factors are also completely independent and non-linear considerations, according to his hierarchy of needs theory. In addition, although some motivational hygiene factors (achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement) may increase job satisfaction of teachers the absence of hygiene factors (company policies, working conditions, collegial interactions, salary and benefits, job security) may lead to teachers' job dissatisfaction.

Klassen et al. (2012) submitted that the teacher labor force and teachers' response to employment factors have changed significantly in the past several decades. Factors that influenced job satisfaction earlier tended to be those that provided extrinsic rewards, such as promotions, benefit improvements, bonuses, or decreases in work hours (Fong, 2015; Pasalo, 2012). McCollum (2014) and Pasalo (2012) discovered that there had been a shift away from extrinsic motivators toward intrinsic motivators for the past 25 years. These intrinsic motivators include increased collaboration, provisions for mentoring, emphasis on the development of collegial relationships, and recognition of personal-professional achievements (Aziri, 2011; Feldmann, 2011; Hofmans et al., 2013).

The motivation-hygiene theory provides a good framework for employees to analyze their values and motivations to help them determine their career path as indicated

by Waititu (2010) and Pitsoe (2013). As applied to the teaching profession, teachers can make a calculated and systematic cost-benefit analysis of their future in the profession based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Pitsoe, 2013). Based on the findings from this research study, international overseas-hired teachers have identified job satisfaction and dissatisfaction elements as central to their decisions to remain or leave certain schools. This information is beneficial in that it can provide direction for school administrators to take in the development of potential solutions to reduce the increasing incidence of overseas-hired international teacher turnover rates in EARCOS member schools.

Perspectives of the International Teacher

In any profession, individuals leave their chosen line of work from time to time. In the education field, teacher turnover is ongoing and is becoming a growing problem (Lytle, 2013). The ongoing problem that educational systems face emerged from the data from the focus group interviews in this research. McCollum (2013) revealed that the number of teachers leaving education positions each year and the number of new teachers entering the profession are becoming increasingly disproportionate. Jacob et al. (2012) and Karsenti and Collin (2013) indicated that less than 25% of new teachers to the profession, chose to leave after their first year of teaching. Shaw and Newton (2014) revealed teacher turnover percentages of up to 30 and Waddell (2010) found cases of nearly 50%.

To enable educational institutions to develop ways to address the issue of teacher turnover, this concept must first be understood from the perspective of the teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2011). Lytle (2013) and Ronfeldt et al. (2011) suggested that information about staffing and teacher turnover needs to be carefully examined to ensure its accuracy.

Studying this information can also provide a better comprehensive understanding of the magnitude of the issues surrounding teacher turnover and the connection to and complexity of each organization. Therefore, the development of an understanding of international overseas hire teachers' perspectives on teacher turnover was necessary to identify the causes of teacher turnover, better understand the implications of teacher turnover, and obtain ideas from international teachers toward the provision of measures that can be taken to address this problem. I studied the rationale that teachers have for switching schools or leaving the teaching profession. These studies covered a broad cross section of teachers within the profession including retired teachers, new teachers, veteran teachers, and school administrators. The statistics and data collected speak to the enormity and diversity of information available on teacher turnover and teachers' rationale for their employment decisions (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Lynch, 2012; Schafer et al., 2012).

Based on the analysis of the data, I selected literature that related specifically to the push and pull factors associated with teacher morale. Among the research studies available are topics that include (a) retention and turnover (Gardner, 2010), (b) attrition (McCollum, 2014), (c) school leadership (Ngotngamwong, 2012; Shaw & Newton, 2014), (d) teacher resilience (Greenfield, 2015; Gu & Day, 2013), and (e) teacher personality (Burns & Machin, 2013). Additional common and related reasons for teacher turnover included; teacher salary and benefits packages (Pasalo, 2012), personal-professional reasons (Petty et al., 2012), and workplace conditions (Taleb, 2013). This plethora of information reveals a broad range of perspectives that provided greater insights, understanding, and appreciation of factors for and the implications of teacher

turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This information also better equips educational institutions with data that will enable them to develop strategies to combat the growing problem of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Factors that Influence International Teachers' Employment Decisions

There are almost always many variables involved in making important employment decisions for international teachers (Candle, 2010). Decisions will vary from individual to individual and may change at different stages of individual teacher's career depending on personal or professional circumstances (Beltman et al., 2011; Greenfield, 2015). From the focus group data collected and analyzed it was determined that the factors that influenced international teachers' employment decision were directly related to the effectiveness of school systems, administrative support, mentorship opportunities, their professional learning environment, and other features of the salary and benefits packages offered. According to Fong (2015), most employment decisions made by teachers link to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Additional research conducted by Adams (2010) and Mansfield et al. (2014) indicated that a teacher's self-efficacy can be closely linked and embedded within the motivational-hygiene theory and is an important factor in a teacher's employment decision-making process.

Ong et al. (2014) and Dunn (2014) indicated that researchers gain a better understanding of teachers' rationale and motivation for staying or leaving their current employment position by examining the push and pull factors associated with and related to the problem of teacher turnover in international schools. Curtis (2012); Kealy (2010); Ingersoll and Merrill (2012); and Martinez et el. (2010) identified push factors as features that prompt teachers to leave their school. These may include elements such as a lack of

administrative presence and support; inadequate mentoring programs; a lack of autonomy; a deficiency in collaborative opportunities within the professional learning communities; and situations that present challenging collegial partnerships and job-related professional conflicts (Gujarati, 2012; Hoigaard et al. 2012; Knox & Anfara, 2013). Pull factors, on the other hand, tend to draw individuals away from one school and lead them to another school or on an entirely different career path (Dunn, 2014). These may include an attractive salary and benefits package, an opportunity for career advancement, potential for improvements in both personal and personal-professional working conditions, or enhanced environmental conditions (Gratz, 2011; Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010; Petty et al. 2012). In international schools, because of the identified transient nature of its international teacher population, it is important for the heads of these schools to identify and adequately address the motivational factors of its teachers to enable them to retain them.

Cox (2012) and Ngotngamwong (2012) indicated that although both push and pull factors contribute to the decision-making process for teachers, other personal factors and organizational characteristics that will enable us to have a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the challenges related to high international overseas-hire teacher turnover must be examined. For example, despite having an attractive salary and benefits package, international teachers in Hong Kong continue to make the transition from teaching to other professions within Hong Kong (Lam & Yan, 2011; Ngotngamwong, 2012). In other research studies, professional educators who were seeking career advancements and other professional growth opportunities that were not on the horizon within their current school were more prone to be drawn away from their

current teaching environment to another school (Fong, 2015; Mancuso et al., 2011; Schaefer et al., 2012). Anomalies also appeared in research studies related to teachers' employment and turnover. Jacob et al. (2012) and Ronfeld et al. (2011) discovered that some international teachers choose to remain in their current teaching environment regardless of their current assignment or working conditions. The decision to remain does not necessarily imply that teachers are satisfied with their current situation; instead, it means that this choice does not contribute to teacher turnover.

Teachers involved in this study also communicated that turnover occurs naturally within organizations due to retirements, restructuring, promotions, or personal reasons (Cox, 2012; Roberts, 2012). However, research reveals that there are numerous factors that *encourage* teachers to leave schools prematurely, creating unwanted teacher turnover (Fontaine et al., 2012; Koech et al., 2014; White, 2012). These undesirable entities are simply the opposite of the factors that affect teachers' decisions to stay at a school (Armer, 2011; Aziri, 2011; Butler, 2014; Gujarati, 2012). Examples of these from the data analysis included the following: (a) the lack of professional growth opportunities, (b) insufficient salary and benefits packages, (c) the lack of administrative support, (d) feelings of being devalued, (e) excessive bureaucracy and paperwork, (f) low staff morale, and (g) and the absence of a positive school climate and culture.

On the other hand, satisfied teachers willingly contribute to the school and school community (Adams 2010). The contributions toward organizational success provide teachers with a sense of value and self-worth (Knox & Anfara, 2013; Maslow, 1943; Mota, 2010; Taleb, 2013). A teacher's self-efficacy can have positive effects on teacher job satisfaction (Fong, 2015; Greenfield, 2015; Hoigaard et al., 2012; Mansfield et al.,

2014). These gratifying experiences, in the context of the acquisition of personal-professional growth opportunities within the professional learning community, also contribute to the enhancement of a schools' climate and culture (Bailey, 2013; Battersby & Verdi, 2015; Stronge et al., 2011). These contributions invariably lead toward growth and sustainability of the organization (Adams, 2010; Lynch, 2012; Mancuso et al., 2011). Therefore, a keen understanding of international teachers and the complex variables related to their professional lives is essential toward an understanding of the employment decisions made by international teachers.

The Effect of Teacher Turnover on International Schools

Because teachers are critical to student learning and schools' mandates are to improve student learning, performance, and achievement, international schools require qualified, long-term teachers as their cornerstones (Bailey, 2013; Gujarti, 2012; Ngotngamwong, 2012; Sass et al., 2012). Data analysis from this research is indicative of what the literature reveals. Shifts in school climate, continuity in school programming, and financial burdens incurred by schools are a direct result of international teacher turnover. Numerous studies reveal that student improvement, achievement, and performance are more positively influenced in schools where low teacher turnover rates occur than in schools with higher teacher turnover rates (Alecia, 2014; Barbieri et al. 2013). In addition to student performance, studies confirm that the frequency of high teacher turnover rates also has a deleterious effect on school climate, culture, and community (Mancuso et al. 2010; Mota, 2010; Ronfeldt et al. 2011). Fluctuations in teacher turnover also impact school administrators, planners, and policy-makers. High or low teacher turnover informs and influences staffing decisions, recruitment, contracts,

benefits packages, and school policy (Butler, 2014; Mancuso et al., 2011; Puangjakta & Vinitwatanakhun, 2015; Varlas, 2013).

Of all the individuals associated with education, it is the students that experience the greatest effect of teacher turnover, whether this being positive or negative (Mancuso et al., 2010). In this process, it is teachers who have the greatest influence, most profound, and lasting effect on shaping students' learning, performance, achievement, and character (Gu & Day, 2013; Martinez et al., 2010; Teleshaliyev, 2013). Effective schools make every attempt to reduce the incidents of teacher turnover by making an investment in the retention of their good teachers, thereby increasingly the likelihood of having successful students and a successful school community (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). Sometimes administrators will also intentionally and strategically acquire a few new teachers to help promote and facilitate improvements to student learning by blending fresh ideas from new teachers with those of existing teachers on staff.

If there is a need to hire new teachers to replace departing ones, schools will often spend time mentoring these new teachers (Mancuso et al., 2011; Mota, 2010). In schools that have higher incidents and frequency of teacher turnover, availability of seasoned teachers is more of a challenge, resulting in vacancies often being filled with inexperienced teachers (Ozoglu, 2015). The combined hiring process and mentoring take considerable time and effort, thus reducing the time available to administrators to perform their duties and responsibilities related to teacher preparation and performance (Fong, 2015). This lack of administrative availability adversely affects the personal mentoring needed by new teachers to the school, resulting in a decrease of personal encouragement, support, development, and trust (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Some teacher turnover is natural and expected in international schools; however, it has been proven that frequent teacher turnover has an adverse effect on a students' ability to learn effectively, on their performance, achievement, and long-term success (Barbieri et al., 2013; Buchanan et al., 2013; Mancuso, 2010). The initial effect following minor teacher turnover usually reveals a slight faltering in student performance, but as students adapt to the change in teachers, they regain their stride (Watlington et al., 2010). However, if teacher turnover continues at an increasing rate its implications extend beyond students and can begin to undermine and affect the greater school community (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Mota, 2010). Turnover can adversely affect school programs, initiatives, and relationships between the school and parent community, and drive up costs associated with recruitment (Ingersoll, 2001; Mancuso, 2010).

Schools must work toward protecting their investment in teachers if improving student learning, performance, achievement, and ensuring that students have a healthy learning environment are schools' mandates (Greenfield, 2015; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lauchlan et al., 2012). Combatting turnover requires a shared and sustained commitment by schools, beginning with school administration (Anderson, 2010; Dajani, 2014). To begin with, it is critical that administrators understand what motivates their teachers to stay or leave a teaching position (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Khan & Aziz, 2013; Waititu, 2010; Yesil-Dagli, 2012). This knowledge is foundational to all actions that follow. To assist schools in this regard, Gujarti (2012) and Mancuso et al. (2011) recommended that schools commit to reviewing their teacher retention practices.

Application of International Teacher Turnover Research

The administrative leadership support for international teachers and the ineffectiveness of operating systems that support teachers' growth and development that have been identified from the data analysis as the main contributors of international teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This aligns with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory linking satisfiers (motivators) and hygienes (dissatisfiers) of teachers' jobs and is applicable for this project study because the goal for this research examines international teachers' perceptions associated with teacher turnover (Herzberg, 2014; Herzberg et al., 1959). Chandra et al. (2011) and Leibowitz et al. (2012) conveyed that administrators can increase teachers' job satisfaction through the attainment of their hygiene needs. Although their hygiene needs may be ephemeral, teachers also find the innate needs for alternative stimulators that can be achieved through other professional opportunities within an educational organization (Bailey, 2013; Fong, 2015).

The data analysis also confirms that the effect of teacher turnover extends beyond just teachers. Students and school communities are also directly affected by high teacher turnover. High teacher turnover can produce any number of disruptive organizational challenges that can hamper school improvement and include issues that relate to the progress made with school initiatives and projects, the maintenance and sustainability of a positive school climate and culture, and other issues that might otherwise promote and build a strong community (Fong, 2015; Mancuso, 2010; Petty et al., 2012; Varlas, 2013). Invariably sometimes schools also find it necessary for the greater good of the organization, to remove teachers whose productivity levels have dropped or have chosen

to follow a different directional focus than the school, and this can occasionally occur in schools (Leithwood, 2010).

Gaining insights into finding potential solutions that focus on the problem of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools, begins with a thorough understanding of perspectives of the international teachers. Equally important is an understanding of their perceptions of the causes of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover and their perceived effect that this problem has on international schools. Dunn (2014); Mancuso (2010); and Puangjakta and Vinitwatanakhun (2015) implied that understanding teacher turnover is vital due to the positive correlations found between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions. Candle (2010) and Waititu (2010) advocated that, based on the motivation-hygiene theory, the insights of teachers' perceptions will provide a more thorough understanding causes and implications related to teacher turnover. School administrators can use this evidence to determine international teacher behavioral patterns and factors that influence and allow then to make solution-based staffing, employment, and operational decisions (Anderson, 2011; Butler, 2014; Puangjakta & Vinitwatanakhun, 2015). These have been identified in the data analysis as the contributing push and pull factors related to international teachers' satisfiers and hygienes. Understanding these factors will also enable administrative leadership teams an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of their operating systems related to teachers' growth and development. Beyond this, international school policies can be adjusted to reflect the internal changes necessary that will lead to the attainment of the goals of improving student learning, performance, and achievement in international school environments.

White Paper Presentation

A *white paper* is a reliable and credible report that provides concise information for readers about an important topic and presents the issuing body's philosophical position on the matter (Sakamuro, Stolley, & Hyde, 2015). This white paper was developed and constructed from the themes that emerged from this research study, based on information extrapolated from a comprehensive literature review, and out of the necessity to develop a plan that EARCOS member school administrators could potentially use to address the issue of increasing international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates in international schools (Appendix H). The white paper uses accounts of research study participant perceptions to outline the causes of overseas-hire international teacher turnover in international schools. It also addresses the effect that overseas-hire international teacher turnover has on international schools, and provides suggested measures that international school organizations can implement that can potentially reduce the occurrence of international overseas-hire turnover in international schools. If international schools can learn the causes and understand the effect of international overseas-hire teacher turnover, they will be in a better position to develop strategies to combat high international overseas-hire teacher turnover and protect their investment in their teachers who have the greatest effect on improving student learning (Luscombe et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010).

Resources and Supports

The preliminary resources necessary to determine the need for and to begin to address the issue surrounding the incidence of high overseas-hire international teacher turnover in overseas international schools is the information data that is currently

available in individual international schools' human resource department. Secondary information that can contribute to this existing data can be extrapolated from the answers to the questions asked of the research study participants involved in this study:

1. What are the causes of high overseas-hire international teacher turnover in international schools?

2. What is the effect of high overseas-hire international teacher turnover at international schools?

3. What are potential measures that international school organizations can implement to successfully reduce the occurrence of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools?

Additional questions that need to be answered by school administrators are the following:

1. Is the incidence of teacher turnover high enough to warrant changes in schools' current practices?

2. What adjustments in current practices are international schools willing to make?

3. What resources are schools willing to reallocate to address teacher turnover?

Roles and Responsibilities

My role as the sole researcher in this study is to provide international school administrators with results obtained from the data collected from focus group interviews involving international educators. Information provided will be in the form of a white paper document, with a link to the full researcher's study. This information will enable international school administrators to make more informed decisions about their

immediate and long-term needs regarding international overseas-hired teacher turnover. School administrators at each school will determine their needs, and be responsible for facilitating the necessary measures to address the international overseas-hire teacher turnover issues within their schools.

Potential Barriers

Barriers to school improvement plans exist in all international school organizations. One potential barrier for this project might be that the independent international school administrators may determine that the incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover is not critical enough for them to address the issue at their school. School administrators may also determine that the issue of international teacher turnover is not the main priority related to the direction or focus of their school improvement plan. Finally, because enrollments determine most schools' international budgets, reallocation of resources to address teacher turnover may budget priority.

Perceptions of the Causes of Overseas-hire International Teacher Turnover in International Schools

Examining the issues surrounding the causes of high international overseas-hire teachers is critical if schools are to continue to consistently deliver on their mandate of ensuring that students receive high quality education in international schools (Mancuso (2010). I specifically targeted seasoned international educators as participants in this research study because these teachers can draw from and reflect on a greater abundance of formative experiences, awareness, and understandings from their global adventures in education, compared to the relatively new and inexperienced educators entering the international teaching profession (Angeline, 2014; Cox, 2012; Fong 2015). Based on

these seasoned teachers' collective experiences and perceptions, I have identified several contributing factors that they perceive contribute to or influence high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in the international.

The perceptions of experienced international overseas-hired teachers who participated and contributed to this research revealed a range of reasons for international overseas-hire teacher turnover. A summary of these main contributing factors and themes that emerged that affect teachers' decisions to remain or depart from their school include mentorship opportunities, collegial relationships, student demographics, personal factors, salary and benefits packages, effectiveness of school systems, and administrative support. Although not all participants identified all factors with the same degree of importance, commonalities exist among top indicators. Administrative leadership support and the effectiveness of school systems that support teacher growth and development and individual school sustainability have been identified as the main factors weighing into to teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and, consequently, the main contributors that contribute to high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools.

One of the initial factors presented by interview participants when they transition into a new country, culture, and school is that of a need for mentoring. Mentorship plays an integral role and is a huge factor that enables new teachers to effectively adapt to cultural transitions on a personal and professional level. Participant C commented, "We have been very impressed with the amount of mentoring, member care, and support we have received in coming here" and Participant D added, "… here's your apartment, it's furnished, here's this, here's that. That might be part of why my transition was much easier here." Participants who were assigned a mentor or had one available to them

helped them and provided them with a sense of comfort knowing that they were not being left alone. The five participants who were assigned a mentor in the different schools in which they worked indicated that it was a great strength of the participating school and that having an assigned mentor added value to their experience. During the varying one 2-week orientation sessions, the mission, vison of the school, and culture were strategically infused into the mentorship experience. Participant C conveyed, "I do believe that first impressions in that nature are helpful to get us settled and then put the idea in our mind that this is a place we want to stay longer." For the beginning teachers, this distinguished emotional support system and constructive guidance enabled teachers to land well.

In schools where a mentorship program did not exist or was limited in its attempt to satisfy teachers' needs, this presented a weakness of the school. Because of this limitation, foundational information communicated to beginning teachers was sporadic and perceived as unintentional, and this did not lend itself to a necessary smooth cultural or new school transition and did not help to facilitate new teachers' professional growth and development. Several participants indicated that their lack of support for teacher mentoring influenced their feelings of not being valued and their uneasiness in their professional competence. Because of new teachers not being adequately supported, they became frustrated when the expected supports did not meet their needs. Identified supports included the following: personal local accommodations such as banking, access knowledge to food and meat markets, transportation arrangements, and professional needs related to program planning, instructional strategies, student assessment tools, and material procurement. Participant A commented, "…the people that were supposed to

help me get integrated into my job didn't I don't think have done a very good job at all and this has been a rough transition for me." Participant B shared that, "…there was some relocation help but was very limited. There was no one to help me." The perceived lack of mentoring support most often led teachers to alternative means for support, including asking colleagues for assistance or solving problems on their own.

Additional factors weighing into to teachers' decisions to remain in an international school, but with a lesser significance were interpersonal relationships with colleagues, student demographics, personal factors, and the salary and benefits packages. After the settling in period and as teachers become acclimatized to their school environment they establish and further develop their personal and professional relationships. Formation of significant, fruitful relationships will determine teachers' longevity in an international school setting. Supportive interpersonal relationships make conditions good. One participant shared that, "…when there is a conducive supportive, encouraging environment that's great… if there's local politics or if there's power plays, that's going to be a negative." Only one participant indicated that she or he experienced only one challenging situation related to interpersonal conflicts in any of their school environments. Although this situation was not pleasant, it was not the single determining factor that led to changing employment locations.

Teachers' personal factors were drawn from participants' experiences and from considerations that they shared with other teachers whom they know Examples of personal factors identified by participants include those that affect their lives predominantly outside of school. Examples of these may include; air quality, living conditions, personal safety, and personal family crisis. Pollution is a factor; however,

people can tolerate it for a short term if a positive school environment outweighs the air quality standard. Participant B indicated, "Two years ago, when the pollution was quite high, I remember the director when he went recruiting told us that when he came back from the recruitment fair, people asked him about the pollution. People still came." Another participant added, "…that's one of the reasons that I left. I enjoy long distance running, but I did not enjoy it there." Participant R revealed that even though his wife was robbed at knifepoint in the middle of the day in their first month, they did finish our 2-year term and that was not the reason for not renewing or extending their contract. They simply took some precautionary measures from that day forward. Participant B communicated that "… their family knew of a young lady teacher in Honduras was robbed four times in 1 year." Although these could have been factors that contributed to teachers moving, these did not appear to be significant enough to sway or discouraged them from moving.

International teachers occupy varying different places on their professional development and knowledge base spectrum. More than half of the participants were encouraged by the amount of professional development and continuous learning opportunities afforded to them by their employers. Participant D responded to the professional development opportunities by sharing that, "…it is really nice and you have a lot of freedom in how you use it. "Participant E conveyed, "Personally I'd say that's had a huge effect on the opportunities for decisions to stay or to go. I've been very lucky with my professional development and that's definitely contributed to my longer stays at schools." Participant D added the following:

My current school has excellent, just really stellar, professional development opportunities for people. The benefits are excellent. I think for several our staff, that has enticed them to stay. I've started specializing in some areas that I normally haven't because of good advice from a curriculum coordinator and because of the school being extremely supportive in helping us to get the courses that we need. My previous school, not as much.

Recruiters always want to portray and market their school and attract and retain the best teachers, and the salary and benefits package are an integral part of their campaign. However, according to participants interviewed, the compensatory package is secondary to other important considerations. Initially, the package may be an attractant to entice teachers to be attracted to a school, but it is rare for participants to use this as their determining factor for them to leave a school. Participant E imparted the following:

I don't think it plays a big role in people staying. I rarely see people saying, 'I have to leave because I need to earn more.' It's more of an initial factor. Unless a country you go to is wildly more expensive than you realized. I've never heard of people leaving because of salary.

Participant F described the situation.

The more important factors include the message about a schools' mission and vision and the positive reports about the schools. I'm going to agree that it is an issue but at my school we have low salaries and good benefits. It's important for us to talk about mission and vision of the school so that we hire teachers that are committed to the school because of a fit with mission and vision. Because we're not going to attract them by a high salary.

One final point worth mentioning is that because not all countries have the same cost of living, teachers must ensure that they ask the right questions of recruiters that will enable them to have a clearer indication of what the purchasing power of their salary and benefits will be before they commit to a contract.

The final two most important factors that participants identified as contributing to international teacher turnover linked to administrative leadership support and the effectiveness of school systems that support teacher growth and development and individual school sustainability. Components of these include; administrative support at the site level, communication and transparency, teacher workloads, autonomy, professional development, and professionalism. Components of this administrative supports need to work in harmony within effective school systems. Effective schools managed and maintained all facets of these components while ineffective schools struggled, resulting in an adverse effect on staff moral and subsequently teacher turnover.

Participants conveyed that most teachers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction was related to workplace stressors, which are given realities, and that they will always endure some stressors in the workplace. They went on to imply that these stressors leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be minimized through intentional administrative support mechanisms related to effective, transparent communication of the school's mission and vision and of their teachers' expectations. Supportive administration and conversely non-supportive administration can be central to an international teachers' decision to remain or depart from their current assignment.

The importance of workload, autonomy, and professionalism in international schools also weighed heavily in the conversations related to job satisfaction. Five

participants share that workload is a consideration, but not the most important one if good quality systems are in place in schools. Participant D indicated that "…when I finally left the international school that I was at for 7 years, that was my deciding factors in selecting a school…" Participant D added the following:

> Obviously, things change, schools grow, schools get smaller, and teachers have to be flexible, but I'm lucky to work with a lot of extremely hard-working teachers. If there are good systems in place, the workload changes. It's when there are no systems in place and a heavy workload, that's when it becomes unmanageable.

Participant F shared the following:

> It's a factor at our school but not a large factor because I believe in our secondary at least that we traditionally have had a lower workload than most other schools… it's hard to complain because I'm bringing them up to what might be the average at most other schools.

Participant E indicated the following:

> … the teaching load would not even rank in the top five. I think the mission, the culture of the school, the systems in place, the support, the opportunities for growth, the opportunities for creativity and autonomy would outweigh those things. I'm just thinking now about the three international schools I've been at.

Participant D described some schools:

> …the biggest thing that makes me want to stay at a school is partially to be treated like a professional. I've worked in environments where we're sort of micro-managed to death as if I haven't been teaching for a long time.

Participant A stated the following:

Autonomy is huge. You hired me to do a job and if you don't give me the freedom to do my job why did you hire me? The same participant added that "When there was a problem … I wasn't given the freedom to address those problems and wasn't given a voice and that has been a big problem for me and this past year … this is completely the opposite to my previous teaching experiences.

Participant F conversed that

…there's a goal to allow teachers to have the type of autonomy that encourages them to be innovative and to take risks and do things which can take advantage of new technologies and the things that are not standardized at the school. It's also important to have a certain amount of systems in place to support all teachers so that once those systems are in place.

Participant D added the following:

Most of the time I feel things are improving because I have a certain degree of autonomy, but I think that this was not always the case. With prior administrations, there was so much autonomy that there was not always teaching and learning going on as result of it. Maybe if you do have good systems that are there to support teachers to be creative and to be innovative that's good.

Participant E agreed.

… one of the key factors for keeping people through having those systems and a clear understanding and a common approach is having a low turnover in the leadership team. By having that low turnover, assuming you've got a good team, you have that experience and that consistency and you're not changing every 2 or 3 years. By having that consistent approach, that culture can grow and then two

other things can happen. One of them is that at the point of recruitment, it's a very clear message about 'this is the type of autonomy you will have within this construct, here are the parameters of your autonomy because this is what we believe in, this is our approach, and beyond that you have a lot of autonomy'. The second one would be the part of systems for what some schools would call appraisal or professional growth evaluation, and for that also to be 'as we were talking about before' very transparent and supportive so that we're all moving in a common direction.

Interview participants provided personal accounts of their experiences with current and former administrators and how these affected their working conditions and employment decisions. Participant D shared that, "…compared to the previous administrator, the current one is 'very direct, very transparent, and just in putting in systems that we needed drastically.'" Two participants agreed that they have always maintained a very amiable relationship with their administrative supervisors and that their support was always professional and trusting and that their administrative colleagues demonstrated a willingness to be open to new ideas and provide supports with curricular or parental concerns. Other participants shared opposing views of support mechanisms. One participant expressed that their supervisor was demeaning, communicated in an evasive manner, and did not exude a very trusting disposition. Participant A imparted that, "…whereas here I felt very micro managed and untrusted so that's been hard." Participant D spoke, "Admin, that's all I'm going to say. Sorry, but it's a trickle-down of the worst kind and that's been the case in international schools. It's a lack of leadership and that usually is the primary factor." Other participants agreed that where there is not a

lot of transparency, friction results, and that leads to a decline in staff morale. Although these are two contrasting scenarios, it is believed that strong administrative support is critical to the success or lack of success of an international school and the effect that it has on school morale. These relationships affect colleagues both at a personal and professional level. All participants agreed that a supportive administrator and the forging of strong relationships between staff, that is built on trust, is pivotal to teacher job satisfaction.

These findings represent some of the main and supplementary contributing factors associated with that influence high overseas-hire teacher turnover in the international schools, gleaned from the international overseas-hire teachers' collective experiences, perceptions, and opinions. The main contributing factors identified by participants focused on the administrative support available to them and the overall effectiveness of the operational school systems in place in their schools. Secondary influences presented that closely align with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (workplace push and pull factors) and weigh into to teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction include international overseas-hire teacher growth and development needs and individual school sustainability. An examination of the causes of the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover will enable schools to draw their attention to and focus more closely on the effect that high international overseas-hire teacher turnover may have on their individual school.

Perceived Effect That Overseas-hire International Teacher Turnover Has on International Schools

Examining what the effect of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover is on schools is the next foundational step that international schools must embark on that will enable them to arrive at a solution to combat the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in their schools. Butler (2014), Cox (2012), and Hansen et al. (2016) indicated that by not examining the causes of international teacher turnover, international schools run the risk of problems with program and curricular continuity, shifts in stability and sustainability of school initiatives, and an adverse effect on school-community relationships involving students, parents, and vested community partners. Participants involved in this research generalized that international overseas-hire teachers' decisions to stay or leave the international school where they work, have a lasting effect on the school community. Some of these outcomes may result in positive outcomes while others may produce less than desirable results.

Study participants identified three main implications of high teacher turnover in international schools: a detrimental effect on school climate, a lack of continuity in school programming, and a mistrust by students. Perceived important negative repercussions associated with high teacher turnover were the financial costs and effects of human resource management of replacing outgoing teachers with new teachers. On a more positive note, the replacement of new teachers meant that schools have the potential to inherit new ideas brought in from the outside by the newly hired teachers entering the school.

One of the immediate results of staff departures is noticeable in the climate shift and in the morale of staff. This is evident because teachers in international circuits are required to give their notice very early in the school year, as early as October of the current school year. Thus, many questions and rumors tend to begin circulating and percolating in schools in all schools but more so in school that traditionally have higher than normal turnover rates. Participant R made a suggestion:

When teachers have to go back home, retire, or things such as that, just going back to re-patriate, that's one reason. The other one is they leave on bad terms, and there's maybe a difference there in the morale when teachers leave for different circumstances, say positive or less than positive.

Participant D conveyed the following:

If quality people are coming in that are like-minded and have the same goals, I'm always excited. When there's a lot of turnover, I've seen various departments in my current school where because there's been so much turnover, it's a weak department, they know it's a weak department, and people keep going because it's hard for them to establish curriculum and you can see where the kids suffer. We have a lot of issues specifically in our … department. Our head left, a new head came in and it wasn't a good fit. Then other experienced people left and you can see the result in our student learning. It's very apparent that it's not a functioning team. That is because of how many people have come and gone. They never really established that foundation as a department.

Participant R indicated that, "it is hard to stay motivated and positive when you are in a constant rebuilding phase, isn't it?" Participant E shared, "…that's just part of the

cycle of bringing in new exciting ideas … you want some turnover on the one hand because you don't want to become stagnant, but on the other hand you don't want it to be so high that you lose that institutional knowledge and lose that culture that takes a couple of years to develop." Participant B shared an opposite view by stating, "That's a good point. The way I responded was more of me looking at turnover from a negative result of teacher turnover." Participant E replied with, "The amount of turnover is key, because you're always going to have turnover.

Aside from the staff morale being affected by turnover, students almost always bear the brunt of teacher transition. Participant A indicated the following:

I would say that one of the big problems is a lack of continuity. Usually everybody's probably thought they've got a good idea but then someone else has a good idea but that person is long gone. That person created something but nobody knows what it is or the people who do walk out the door and then the new people that come in have no idea how to even do it or what they're supposed to do. Continuity in curriculum, in admin, dealing with parents, dealing with students, I would say the whole gambit of an international school. When people walk out of that door they're always taking something with them; whether it's a skill set, knowledge, or how-to, whatever it may be. It can sometimes be replaced but sometimes in some places it is never replaced.

Participant A shared an experience.

I would say there is a definite mistrust of the students mistrusting the teachers when they're not sure how long that teacher is going to stay. …teachers only stayed for one year. The students really did not open up much to those teachers.

They tended to mistreat those teachers and almost push them away because they were testing them to see if they would stay or not. Now the second year we were there, there was a noticeable improvement in the attitudes of the students towards us, and by the end of the fifth year, we were one of the very few teachers that were still there. We had a good rapport with the students. That is just one of my observations. I noticed that when there is high teacher turnover, the students just dismissed the teacher, especially that first year.

Participant R responded, "Sounds like you're talking about relationships." Participant C replied, "Yeah, that's right. Respect, relationships, and as far as they're concerned. Yeah, the teachers came for a job, they wanted an overseas experience, and they won't be here long. What's the sense of really sharing our lives with them? That's the feeling I got, my perception."

From an administrators' stance, the actual implied costs associated with replacing international teachers can be astronomical. These are including financial cost factors plus the those associated with the development and forging of new relationships and replacing new teachers annually or semi-annually. Two participants implied that turnover is high because a lot of new teachers were just there because they could get a job, establish some marketability, stay for as short time, find a marriage partner and then usually leave. Participant C shared the following:

In other areas, there's a lot of families amongst the staff so there's a lot of stability. People have been here for a long time. What I'll say is that it undermines the student body and undermines the well-being of the school when there's a very high turnover rate among teachers.

This turnover forces administrators to continually invest or waste on hiring and rehiring practices. Regardless of the turnover rates, school climate is always affected by turnover and there is a certain settling in adjustment period for the new teachers, students, and the school community. Participant E shared that, "Even if you're new and there is a strong culture within the school, it takes a couple years to really feel like you are a member of that culture. It's that threshold that is key." Participant F added the following:

> Even thinking about some of our new teachers this year, they're great additions to our staff and they help build the morale, and doing things the people previously in their positions were not doing. They're bringing new energy and vision and their experiences can be beneficial to a school.

School communities are in a constant flux because of international overseas-hire teacher turnover. These teachers' decisions to change locations can lead to either positive or negative implications on specific school communities for which they leave and arrive. Based on evidence gathered from interviewed participants and the collective knowledge that they conveyed from their educational experiences in international schools, much what they shared implies that the effect that their transiency frequently results in positive experiences for the community that they have departed from. Therefore, long-term solutions are necessary to help schools reduce the high incidence of international overseas-hire teachers in international schools.

Reducing the Incidence of International Overseas-hire Turnover in International Schools

Prior to any type of strategies being developed to reduce the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover, there needs to be a clear understanding of the

causes and implications of high international overseas-hire teacher turnover must be identified first (Luscombe et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2010). According to the international overseas-hired teacher participants involved in this study and from information obtained from the review of literature, two foundational things must occur. First, there needs to be a comprehensive understanding of contributing factors that have an effect on international teachers' decisions to remain or leave their school. Secondly, an understanding of the potential effect that high teacher turnover may have on international schools needs to happen. Equipped with this combined knowledge, administrative site managers, educational planners, and policy developers will be in a better position to create potential solutions to this local and even greater global problem of international overseas-hire teacher turnover.

Study participants identified several related thematic elements and strategies that could potentially be used to address this issue. The main themes have been organized and summarized as having good systems in place by using the school's mission and vison as a guide to create a strong culture where the mission and vison are aligned, improving overall school communication to ensure transparency between all school community members, and though using intentional hiring practices including specifically hiring and retaining quality, like-minded individuals to ensure consistency and longevity. Schools that have good systems in place refers to the ability of a school effectively and efficient operate.

Participant A described a scene:

I think that healthy systems in place where people can communicate and talk or just absolutely huge. This is the other thing too about international schools, this is

your family, and when my job goes wrong, it's not just affecting me, it impacts many other people.

In healthy systems people make an investment in each other. Participant B articulated, "Just one thing comes to mind about a step to reduce turnover. Sometimes when teachers want to leave the director steps in and asks, "Can you please stay?" And then some teachers do stay; they do another contract. I've had that happening a few times."

Alternately when decisions are not in the best interested of students or teachers, this can have an adverse effect on teachers decision-making process. Participant E uttered a common concern.

Teachers find it very frustrating when there is a complete lack of transparency, a lack of consistency, and all the hodgepodge of knee-jerk decisions when the mission should really be the final bottom line for decisions made within the school.

Participant D added the following:

Having spent a year that was very much in flux, I really feel that things trickle down. And it really affected students as well. They know when their teachers are under duress. They may not know the reasons, but they know it.

To reduce international teacher turnover, Participant A suggested that, "… you should have a good, well-functioning board that is vetting decisions." This ought to ensure that the mission and vison are aligned and that there are like-minded individuals responsible for longevity and consistency. Participant E made a further suggestion.

By having that consistent approach, that culture can grow … and would be part of systems for what some schools would call appraisal or professional growth evaluation, and for that also to be very transparent and supportive so that we're all moving in a common direction.

The next idea relates to the importance of improving a school communication to ensure that there is a clear understanding and that transparency occurs between all school community members. Participant C articulated the following:

I think that at least from my perspective, the single most important factor is the communication between the administrators or the senior teachers and the newer teachers. When there is a good thoughtful communication flow and the systems of the school are working well, that is a big plus, or a feeling that you really want to stay.

Participant A stated that," …I don't believe that I could go talk to my supervising principal, and in fact every time I bring something to him, he's scared to death to talk to me about it." Participant B voiced that, "Originally I was going to say that if they increased the salary a little bit, people might stay. But I've changed my mind because yes, communication is important, but also the approachability of the management team." Participant C shared, "Well, I think that at least from my perspective, the single most important factor is the communication between the administrators or the senior teachers and the newer teachers.

Participant D made an assertion.

…. I've been very lucky that the departments that I have been involved in, people have come and people have gone, but I think part of the reason I stayed in the

schools that I have been in is that employers have consistently hired good people, and people that are like-minded in the sense that they want to work collaboratively, that's what I'm looking for. Two participants noted that in one of their experiences, 1-year contracts were the standard offer. This practice did not promote longevity and certainly did not necessarily entice teachers to stay or think long-term.

Participant F describes like-mindedness as, "Having good opportunities for collaboration and teamwork, and not being isolated…" Participant echoed that "one of the key factors for keeping people is through having a clear understanding and a common approach … and having a low turnover in the leadership team. By having that low turnover, assuming you've got a good team, you have that experience and that consistency and you're not changing every two or three years."

Participant generalizations revealed that international schools can significantly reduce the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover by putting a few key elements in place. To systematically reduce the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools requires first, a clear understanding of the causes and the implications followed by a well-developed, clearly communicated, sustainable plan created collaboratively by an international schools' stakeholders. Firstly, schools need to consider creating good operational systems that are deeply rooted and aligned to the school's mission and vision. Secondly, administrative leadership support must be prevalent in the effectiveness of school systems that support individual teachers' professional growth and development in all aspects of schools' daily operations. Teachers need to feel valued, supported, and have a certain degree of

professional autonomy. Finally, consistency and longevity can also be attained though using intentional hiring practices including specifically hiring and retaining quality, like-minded individuals whose values are aligned to those of the school's mission and vision. With the intentional alignment of core values and practices that results in more effective school systems combined with deliberately focused administrative leadership supports, site administrators should be in a better positon to slowly reduce high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in their respective schools. Optimally, these shifts in practice will also bring about a positive contribution to overall improvements in student learning (Luscombe et. al., 2013)

Project Evaluation Plan

The actual outcome of this project will be determined by a goal-based evaluation plan. This process has been selected for this project because these goals are grounded in research and use historical data gleaned from the review of literature as a foundational support. The target is overseas international schools. The goal of this project is for international schools to reduce the incidence of international overseas-hire teachers in their international schools from year to year, and without a specific end time frame as its performance measurement. This type of evaluation enables schools to develop successful processes and refine unsuccessful project strategies on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, this study is bound by the priorities established by each individual international school, the resources available, and their willingness of school administrations to employ measures specific to their local environment, as introduced in the project description, to reduce the international overseas-hire teacher turnover. The success or non-success of this research project will be determined by site-based administrators. Goals for

subsequent years will be re-established based on individual schools' new priorities and availability of resources.

Project's Potential Effect on Social Change

Change processes must begin by identifying a problem, and this research study's project potential for positive effect on social change was borne from knowing that a problem existed. It was identified that international teacher turnover in international schools was a problem that was worthy of investigation. Conversations with EARCOS international overseas-hire teachers and a thorough literature review confirmed this belief.

The results from this project study demonstrated the need to develop and create a means whereby international school systems can reduce international overseas-hire teacher turnover. This project may also lead to positive social changes in international overseas schools by providing international school leaders with strategies that will enhance the professional experiences for teachers (pull factors) and reduce the push factors, thereby potentially increasing teachers' likelihood to commit to remaining in an international school for a loner term. Because this research study project was designed to elicit social change, if schools in the EARCOS organization acquire an enhanced understanding of contributing factors related to the high incidence of international overseas-hire international teacher turnover, they will be better equipped to develop and employ strategies to encourage these teachers to remain. This information can also influence school leadership as they develop educational strategies used to influence improvements to student learning. In addition, this project can also contribute to the body of knowledge that currently exists on international overseas-hire teacher turnover, and

has the potential to affect other important industries within international school communities (D. Musco, personal communication, April 28, 2016).

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this section, I present the purpose of the study, provide a summary of the findings, and identify the project strengths and limitations. I also submit potential methodological, theoretical, and empirical inferences for social change, along with applications and suggestions for further studies that specifically relate to the patterns and influences on teacher turnover. Next, I make recommendations for different methods that can potentially address problems associated with international overseas-hire teacher turnover. Finally, I conclude with a reflective analysis that encompasses the importance of this work throughout the development of this project and of my own personal growth and development as a doctoral study candidate and scholarly practitioner.

Purpose and Nature of the Study

Because high teacher turnover has become a serious problem locally, nationally, and internationally, and is equally a growing concern in segments of the EARCOS region, I investigated the challenges of high international overseas-hired teacher turnover. My specific focus was on the perceptions of international overseas-hired teachers currently employed by schools within EARCOS. I highlighted important findings from which to draw conclusions for further discussion and interpretation. I extend empirical studies conducted on schools in AASSA, EARCOS, ECIS, and NESA by researchers (Desroches, 2013; Mancuso, 2010; Mancuso et al., 2010; Mancuso et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2010). These empirical research studies explored factors and relationships between teacher and school characteristics (push and pull factors) that are related to the decisions

of international overseas-hired teachers' reasons to remain or depart from their international school of employ.

Summary of the Findings

Results from study participants revealed several main contributing factors that influence teachers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction and consequently lead to the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools. The main factors include effectiveness of school systems, administrative support, mentorship opportunities, and benefits packages. Second, I found that the main implications of high teacher turnover on international schools resulted in a detrimental effect on school climate, a lack of continuity in school programming, the financial costs to replace outgoing teachers with new teachers, and, positively speaking, the potential to inherit fresh ideas brought in from the outside by the newly hired teachers entering the school. I also elicited responses from the participants to determine what measures could be taken to reduce high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools. A composite of the research participants' responses included the following: (a) a means to have high functioning operating systems in place by using the school's mission and vison as a guide with which to create a strong culture, (b) a seamless plan to improve overall school communication that will ensure transparency between all school community members, and (c) use of strategic, intentional hiring practices that include specifically hiring and retaining quality, like-minded individuals. These employment practices should ensure the consistency and longevity of international teachers.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This study had several identifiable strengths. The approval and support of this study by EARCOS executive and the initial involvement of school administrators (i.e., principals, superintendents) through the distribution of the participation surveys was paramount to its success. Without this critical assistance in obtaining study participants the study would have taken considerably longer and may not have yielded a thorough representation of EARCOS international overseas-hired teachers.

The focus groups were almost effortlessly established and interviews were easily administered, with a minimal amount of work for school administrators or teachers. The framework for the study enabled superintendents and subsequently principals, following their approval, to simply email study information to prospective teachers. Participants provided their input in a reasonable time frame, including the email of their confirmation to participate, the interviews, and the post-interview verification of the transcripts for accuracy.

A qualitative study, the research questions, and interview questions were all relevant to the themes revealed in the research and obtaining the perceptions of teachers is important to determine their perspectives. Identifying the causes of high international teacher turnover and understanding the effect that teacher turnover has on schools are foundational elements necessary needed before strategies can be developed and implemented. The action phase of this study garnered from international teachers in EARCOS member schools described the steps that they believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools.

The study could lead toward influencing the procedures and practices of schools related to teacher turnover. It can provide integral information that will assist administrators in identifying causes of teacher and help to identify and aid in facilitating retention strategies. In addition, this study can help to reduce financial encumbrances placed on schools relating to investment associated with replacing and integrating new teachers. Finally, this research will serve to enhance the limited body of knowledge that exists on international overseas-hire teacher turnover in schools in the EARCOS region.

Limitations

Even the best designed studies can have certain limitations for researchers. I have identified several potential limitations for this study. These limitations include my inexperience with the qualitative methodology used, the relatively limited sample size targeted may have made it problematic to obtain conclusive outcomes (Brutus et al., 2013), the motives of research study participants, and the question remains as to whether all superintendents and principals disseminated the surveys to enable me to obtain a good cross sectional representation of all viable EARCOS study participants.

Even though specific, ethical protocols were followed in all aspects of this study, my inexperience with this type of methodology may have had a bearing on the study outcomes. Although Lankoski and Bjork (2015) supported small group sizes for interviews, which enabled me to probe deeper into understanding issues, two fewer participants were interviewed due to their unavailability at the time of the interviews. In addition, based on a few of the personal findings presented in the interviews, some teachers may have had concealed motivations for participating in the study. Finally, because the total number of interested respondents to the initial surveys were not very

high, the research believes that the participants may not have reflected a large segment of the 149 K-12 eligible EARCOS schools.

Recommendations for Alternate Approaches

The motivation-hygiene theory devised by Herzberg was used as the functional framework for this qualitative case study research project. This approach assisted me in identifying the factors that EARCOS international overseas-hire teachers believed have an effect on the high incidence of international teacher turnover in international schools. There are other possible methodologies that can be employed to address the issue of the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools. Quantitative or mixed methods research studies can be used to obtain information from all international and locally hired teachers in all EARCOS schools. Information obtained from this type of comprehensive data can elicit a broader account of the perceptions of all teachers. A qualitative longitudinal study of one or several schools with similar teacher and climate demographics may also provide more defined, descriptive data.

The data for this project were based on perceptions of international overseas-hired teachers on teacher turnover, and was obtained from focus groups who met specifically tailored criteria. The recommendations on how to combat the incidence of high international teacher turnover were then presented to EARCOS administrators in the form of a white paper. Instead of using the white paper to convey this information, an alternative approach that I could use to share the perceptions of international overseas-hired teachers on teacher turnover might be in the form of a specific, regimented, prescribed initiatives. Initiatives can take on many forms, including a schools' focus initiative on (a) professional development training on effective schools' systems for

administrators, (b) effective team building seminars for school administrators and teachers, (c) sessions for teachers on developing trusting working relationships, (d) teacher peer mentorship and peer monitoring programs, and (e) school community education on building and maintaining relationships. If schools are willing to make this type of investment, these types of focused alternative opportunities and approaches might help reduce the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools.

Social Change Implications

The intent of the design of this research study was to elicit social change by critically examining the perceptions of international overseas-hire teachers on their employment decisions. Schools can strategically use information from this study to make intentional improvements in educational practices in international schools that would lead to improved student learning. Further implications of this study can lead to the further development of positive social change that can influence operating practices, procedures, and policies of schools in EARCOS and other international or local school systems. Luscombe et al. (2013) and Mancuso et al. (2010) affirmed that insights obtained from this type of qualitative case study analysis can directly influence international schools' operating procedures and policies.

Recommendations for Further Research

In the beginning, because I was uncertain where my doctoral journey would take me, I did not give too much thought to considerations related to making futuristic recommendations for future research. As I progressed through each course, I discovered that each had its way on building on the previous one. During my doctoral study

coursework, it also became evident that there was a huge gap in empirical research available on teacher turnover, especially in overseas international schools. This void, combined with the challenges that superintendents were having replacing exiting teachers, made my decision to pursue a study related to teacher turnover quite clear.

Although my study contributes to the need for further research in this area and to the sparse body of knowledge that exists on teacher turnover in international schools, a large gap in the research still exists. There is a need for continued qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in several international school organizations including AASSA, EARCOS, ECIS, and NESA. For future research that involves teachers, I suggest research that considers variables pertaining to the countries where the teachers taught, location-specific variables within the country, the size and demographics of the school, and type of school. I also recommend continued research that targets international and local hired teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Acquired knowledge through studies and investigations of this nature will enable educators to collectively and collaboratively begin to close the teacher turnover gap and bridge the gap that currently costs schools insurmountable amounts. Such research is designed to improve student learning.

Personal Reflection of the Doctoral Study Process

Throughout the past four years, I have come to highly respect all individuals who have attained a doctoral study degree through such a rigorous program that Walden University or similar universities offer. This journey has provided me with a rigorous research and perseverance skill set that I can emulate and apply with confidence in any educational or employment setting in the future. It has also taught me to learn and

effectively apply necessary time management skills, how to appreciate different perspectives and then apply sound judgement, how to scrutinize appropriate sources and use theories to validate my research study, how to become a better scholarly writer, and to become a more confident practitioner.

The knowledge and understanding that I have gained from research, reading, class and workplace discussions, collaborative group projects, instructors, and colleagues enabled me to thrive as a student and as an educator. The reflective process involved in the research study design and implementation has provided me with a clearer and more accurate understanding of literature components, an understanding and selection of the appropriate quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research methodologies to use for a study, and a broader understanding of the complexity of the application of research instrumentation procedures. It has enabled me to understand better the complex and necessary intricate processes involved in research including ethics, data analysis and validation, and reporting findings. Finally, because the mission of Walden University is grounded in social change, the doctoral study process has enabled me to become a much deeper critical thinker and a promoter of positive social change.

Conclusion

This research study process has led to a personal evaluation of my skills as a doctoral study candidate and scholarly practitioner. Upon careful refection of my journey and all that it encompassed, I can unequivocally proclaim that I am a more equipped educational leader and a social change agent. Also, my personal and professional learning will continue well after I have completed my research study.

This qualitative case study research and culminating development plan to combat high international overseas-hire teacher turnover stemmed from a personal/professional need to address a growing global problem. My hope is to see international school administrators take proactive measures that will strategically bring about positive social changes in their education systems. These actions will result in the reduction of international overseas-hire teacher turnover in international schools and enable international schools to maximize their investment in teachers and make positive contributions toward improving student learning.

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Appendix A: EARCOS Executive Director Letter of Authorization

June 07, 2016

Dear EARCOS Colleagues:

This is a letter of support for a dissertation study being conducted within the EARCOS region. Mr. Leon M. Tkachyk is the Athletic Director at the International School Eastern Seaboard in Chonburi, Thailand. Mr. Tkachyk is also a doctoral candidate at Walden University and, under the advisement of Dr. Don Jones, Mr. Tkachyk is conducting a study that will involve EARCOS international overseas hire teachers. The study will examine the perceptions of international teachers in EARCOS member schools to better understand: 1) what international teachers believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools, 2) what are the results of high international teacher turnover in international schools, and 3) what steps can be taken to reduce high international teacher turnover in international schools.

EARCOS heads of schools will first be asked to give approval for principals and international teaching faculty at their respective schools to participate. Once permission has been granted a follow-up email to the head of school that contains the principal and teacher request for participation, the instructions for the survey, and the link for the survey will be sent.

As with any dissertation study, or any study involving human subjects, The Human Subjects Review Board of the university, in this case Walden University Institutional Review Board, has approved the procedures designed to insure the confidentiality and protection of all participants. As the Executive Director of EARCOS, the EARCOS staff, and I work hard to support research within the EARCOS region as it enhances the work that we do as a regional council.

Mr. Tkachyk will share his study's findings with all participating schools in the EARCOS region once he has completed the work. Thank you for supporting one of your colleagues and administrators. If you have any questions about the study you may also contact Dr. Don Jones, Dissertation Chair, at don.jones@waldenu.edu or Dr. Anita Dutrow, University Research Reviewer, at Walden University, at anita.dutrow@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your support.

I confirm that the above information is accurate and as an authentication, I am providing my email address and an electronic signature certifying that each of the statements above is true.

Signed:
Print Name: Richard T. Krajczar, Ed.D.
Print Title: Executive Director, EARCOS
Email address: dkrajczar@earcos.org

Appendix B: Walden University Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Mr. Tkachyk,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Perceptions of International Teacher Turnover in East Asia Regional Council of Schools."

Your approval # is 09-29-16-0349759. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also, attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Sincerely,
Libby Munson
Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance

Email: irb@waldenu.edu
Fax: 626-605-0472
Phone: 612-312-1283
Office address for Walden University:
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Appendix C: Letter to EARCOS Superintendents

Dear _____

I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in the Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning program at Walden University. I have been approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct my research, as part of the requirements for my doctoral program. My study is entitled, Perceptions of Teacher Turnover in East Asia Regional Council of Schools. I am writing to request your permission to conduct the study in your school. Dr. Dick Krajczar has authorized this study to be conducted in the EARCOS region.

The purpose of my research is to explore and investigate the perceptions that EARCOS international overseas-hire teachers believe impact teacher turnover in international schools. All international teachers who wish to be considered for the study are invited to complete the attached EARCOS Research Study Participation Eligibility Survey. From the entire K-12 international overseas-hire teacher population from the 149 EARCOS members, a total of eight teachers will be selected to participate in one, 90-minute focus group Skype interview. Teachers' participation is solely on a volunteer basis and would be greatly appreciated for the completion of this research study.

Attached please find the EARCOS Executive Director Letter of Authorization, the Walden University IRB Letter of Approval, and the Research Study Participation information page. Upon your approval, please forward the Research Study Participation information page to your school's principals asking them to disseminate to all the international overseas hire teachers. All completed surveys will automatically be emailed back to me to at my Walden University email address. Teachers have until September 15th, 2016 to complete the survey and teachers that are selected to participate in the mini-focus group Skype interviews will be notified by September 20th, 2106.

I look forward to your response and appreciate your participation in this study. Please contact me if you have any queries (66-096-342-1073) leon.tkachyk@waldenu.edu.

Respectfully,
Leon M. Tkachyk, Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Attachment(s)
1-EARCOS Executive Director Letter of Authorization
2-Walden University IRB Letter of Approval
3- Research Study Participation

Appendix D: Research Study Participation

Dear Teacher _____

My name is Leon M. Tkachyk. I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in the Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Program at Walden University in Baltimore, Maryland. I am conducting research on international school teacher turnover for my dissertation.

Research Topic: Perceptions of Teacher Turnover in East Asia Regional Council of Schools

Purpose: To gain an understanding of international teachers' perceptions of teacher turnover in international schools.

Process: You have received this invitation from your principal or superintendent (depending on your school's administrative structure) to be a part of a focus group to discuss my topic.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please open the attached link and complete the brief survey https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Ss19U3ppcOjt765uzJdmeFBeH-sIkANq9zJCAWTpuOQ/edit

This should take approximately 3 minutes of your time. You may opt out of this survey at any time by simply closing the window/tab. All information that you provide in this survey will be confidential and only the researcher will have access to it.

Only eight participants will be selected from the 149 EARCOS member schools for the focus group interviews. Selections will be based on the following criteria:
1. Eligible participants for this research study include pre-K-12 EARCOS member school international teachers employed on an overseas-hired contract, who have taught in at least three countries, in three different international schools, and have at least four year of teaching experience.
2. A simple random sampling strategy will be used to select the final 8 participants.

If you are selected to take part in the research you will be emailed a confirmation of participation, a consent form, and addition study information by October 9th.

Thank you for your participation and support!

Respectfully,
Leon

Appendix E: EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Ss19U3ppcOjt765uzJdmeFBeH-

sIkANq9zJCAWTpuOQ/edit

Appendix F: Email Confirmation of Mini Focus Group Participation

Dear International Teacher _____

Last week you completed the EARCOS Research Study Participant Eligibility Survey and expressed an interest to participate in the study. This is a follow up email to inform you that you have been selected as one of eight international teachers from all the pre-K-12 international overseas-hired teachers in the 149 EARCOS member schools to participate in one 90-minute focus group Skype conference call interview.

Now, if you would still like to participate in the focus-group interviews, please read the attached consent form.

After I receive these forms, I will contact you by email to arrange the Skype conference call interview date and time.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to our interview session and appreciate your participation in this study.

Respectfully,

Leon M. Tkachyk
Walden University Doctoral Candidate
leon.tkachyk@waldenu.edu
780-849-1078 (Canada)

Attachment
1 – Consent Form

Appendix G: Research Interview Question and Subquestions

These questions will give direction to this study.

(1): What factors do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe contribute to high teacher turnover in international schools?

Possible Subquestions:
a. What role does the teachers' settling in, new international school adjustment, and mentoring experience factor into teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

b. How do the benefits packages offered teachers impact teachers' decisions to stay or leave international schools?

c. How do teacher workloads influence teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

d. What roles does teacher autonomy play in teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

e. How do the collegial interpersonal, professional relationships factor into teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

f. What role does the provision for access to resources (supplies and materials) contribute to teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

g. How does teachers' access to professional learning/development impact teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

h. What role does student demographics and school climate have on teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

i. What role does administrative support play in teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

j. How do teachers' out of school personal conditions and experiences impact teachers' decisions to remain or leave an international school?

k. Comment on any other factors that you believe result in high teacher turnover in international schools.

(2): What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?

Possible Subquestions: What do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe is the result of high teacher turnover in international schools?

a. What is the impact on collegial relationships when teachers leave after a short term or long term employment contract?

b. What is the impact on students when teachers leave after a short term or long term employment contract?

c. What is the impact on the school community when teachers leave after a short term or long term employment contract?

d. What is the administrative response to the announcement of teachers leaving the school?

e. Comment on any other factors that you believe result in high teacher turnover in international schools.

(3): What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?

Possible Subquestions:

a. What steps do international teachers in EARCOS member schools believe should be taken to reduce high turnover in international schools?

b. What steps, within their control, should EARCOS member international teachers take to minimize high teacher turnover in international schools?

c. What measures, within their control, should students take to minimize high teacher turnover in international schools?

d. What measures, within their control, can parents take to minimize high teacher turnover in international schools?

e. What measures can school administrations employ to minimize high teacher turnover in international schools?

f. Comment on any other factors that you believe result in high teacher turnover in international schools.

Appendix H: White Paper Presentation

Introduction

This white paper addresses the issues surrounding the increasingly high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates in EARCOS and other international school organizations. Specific information that will be addressed in this presentation include: 1) an outline of the causes of overseas-hire international teacher turnover in international schools, 2) the impact that overseas-hire international teacher turnover has on international schools, and 3) suggested measures that international school organizations can implement that can potentially reduce the occurrence of international overseas-hire turnover in international schools. I used accounts of research study participant perceptions and information gleaned from the review of literature to develop a plan that EARCOS member schools and other international school administrators could potentially use to address the issue of increasing international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates in international schools. If international schools can learn the causes and understand the impact of international overseas-hire teacher turnover they will be in a better position to develop strategies to combat high international overseas-hire teacher turnover and protect their investment in their teachers who have the greatest impact on improving student learning (Luscombe et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010).

Contributors

The researcher, Leon M. Tkachyk, conducted this study. Additional assistance was provided by eight research study participants who are international educators currently employed in one of 149 EARCOS member schools, and Dr. Richard T. Krajczar, the Executive Director of EARCOS, and the EARCOS staff.

Background

The increasingly high incidence of teacher turnover has become a serious problem nationally and internationally. This growing trend presents a significant problem facing international schools. High turnover of international overseas-hire teachers presents a significant financial burden on international schools, adversely impacts student learning and achievement, and upsets the ethos of school communities (Cox, 2012; Desroches, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Russell et al., 2010). It was reported that beginning teacher turnover rates in the United States have increased by 50% in the past decade and the national turnover rates are in the 20% range (McCollum, 2014). Although turnover rates can vary from school to school and year to year internationally, percentages that range above 23 % generally represent a higher than normal turnover rate (Mancuso, 2011). Research conducted in the NESA, the ECIS, and in the AASSA organizations revealed international teacher turnover rates ranging from 0% to 83% (Desroches, 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010).

In a study conducted by Roberts et al. (2010) involving 744 teachers and 32 school superintendents from EARCOS member schools, it discovered that the average teacher turnover rate was 32%. Even though turnover statistics are not readily available from the EARCOS organization, recent accreditation reports indicate that in some parts of the EARCOS region (International School Eastern Seaboard, 2016; International School Kuala Lumpur, 2014; International Schools Association of Thailand, 2014), the teacher turnover have exceeded *normal* operating ranges from 20 to 50 percent annually. EARCOS and other international school organizations do not maintain statistics on teacher turnover, however increasing international overseas-hire teacher turnover in

individual member schools are a concern and this does necessitate our attention as educators (D. Krajczar, personal communication, October 30, 2015; D. Musco, personal communication, April 28, 2016). Krajczar added that any new research-based findings and new innovative ideas based on the EARCOS administrative teams' collective leadership belief, that can reduce international teacher turnover, enhance school climate, and positively impact student learning within EARCOS schools is certainly beneficial (D. Krajczar, personal communication, October 30, 2015).

Recent studies by Fong (2015) Ngotngamwong (2012) in East Asia confirm the challenges faced by schools, related to teacher turnover. Fong's (2015) study revealed that there was a direct correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and teacher turnover and Ngotngamwong (2012) discovered that teachers' employment decisions were also influenced by similar job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors, and these factors are generally accurate predictors of international teacher turnover. Lindqvist et al. (2014) report that the challenges related to teacher turnover reported in the EARCOS network are not unlike the problems that other international schools are experiencing globally, and these fluctuations present the same types of challenges for all education systems. Brunnell (2014) reports that teacher turnover rates as high as 60% with 30% as a common average is crippling attempts to improve the international education providers in that country. Mampane (2012) indicates that teacher turnover in some Australian schools is a serious issue and suggests that there are internal operational issues that schools need to addressed. Schuck et al. (2012) indicate that teacher turnover will always come at a cost to individual teachers, students, and to the school community. Buchanen et al. (2013) maintain that making provisions for and maintaining the quality of teachers' experiences

in the profession is of paramount importance. If teachers' professional concerns are not addressed satisfactorily, their collective knowledge, experience, and commitment may be lost through turnover.

Results from the interviews with the focus group participants directly involved in this research reveal information that parallels what has been presented in previous empirical research studies. Studies conducted by Fontaine et al. (2012) and Desroches (2013) describe push factors (school attributes, administrative support, mentorship) and pull factors (employment package, career advancement, workplace conditions) as some of the many possible factors that contribute to the issues surrounding teacher turnover. Participants involved in this study revealed similar responses that that they perceive influence high international overseas-hire teacher turnover in the international schools that they have been employed in. The push factors they identified with included; administrative leadership support, effective operating systems, and professional autonomy, and pull factors included; mentorship, collegial relationships, and the salary and benefits packages.

Koech et al. (2014) and Sass et al. (2012) suggested that the consensus among scholars is that these identified factors all contribute to teacher attrition and, if are not addressed adequately, are generally disruptive for a schools' success. High international overseas-hire teacher turnover pose significant financial costs for schools, negatively impacts school climate, and has an adverse impact on student learning (Russell et al., 2010; Sass et al., 2012; Yesil-Dagli, 2012). If the goal of individual international schools in EARCOS is to continue to consistently deliver high quality education to their students, a concerted effort must be made to reduce international overseas-hire teacher turnover.

Based on this background data from empirical studies and this study project, I propose that international schools employ solutions to encourage international overseas-hire teachers to remain in these schools, thereby contributing to overall improvements in student learning (Luscombe et al., 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010).

Project Deliverables

To begin to solve the problem of increasing international overseas-hire teacher turnover, it is my recommendation that international schools implement the following measures:

Stage One

1. Determine what the acceptable level of annual international overseas-hire teacher turnover is within your organization, then take the necessary steps to address international overseas-hire teacher turnover that rises above this mark. This can be accomplished by; perusing through your human resource records, reviewing past accreditation documents, and engaging in the important administrative discussions surrounding the acceptable international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates pertaining to your school.

2. Conduct a self-study through an accreditation process that involves both external auditors and all stakeholders in your organization. A comparison of the accreditation reports in a good place to begin this process, followed by a school self-analysis. This process will provide you with useful data related to percentages of international overseas-hire teacher turnover.

3. Examine your school's current administrative leadership styles, practices, and tendencies to determine if there is any connection between these and the current international overseas-hire teacher turnover rates.

4. Work with your administrative team and human resource team personnel and critically examine your schools' hiring practices to determine if these practices promote intentional international overseas-hire teacher longevity.

5. Examine the current systems that your school has in place and ask two most important self-reflection questions, that are aligned with your school's vision and mission, and may be directly or even indirectly related to international overseas-hire teacher turnover. *What are you doing well that allows you to reduce international overseas-hire teacher turnover? What needs to change that will allow you to reduce the incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover?*

6. Investigate the track records of other international schools with similar demographics and with low international overseas-hire teacher turnover, to determine what they are doing well to retain their teachers.

Stage Two

1. Ensure that provisions are made to adequately address all the push and pull factors for all the international overseas-hire teachers. Elicit feedback from all international overseas-hire teachers frequently, in the form of an open forum or focus groups, then make the necessary adjustments that will support the international overseas-hire teachers.

2. Provide ongoing mentorship for new international overseas-hire teachers that extends well beyond the initial *honeymoon* phase for all international overseas-hire teachers. This can even occur well into their second year of teaching, or longer, at your school.

3. Ensure that benefits packages are equitable in relation to the country, standards of living, and in comparison to other international schools of similar standing, locations, and demographics.

4. Place high value on international overseas-hire teachers through the foregoing measures and celebrate international overseas-hire teachers' successes frequently throughout their term at your school.

Stage Three

1. If you find yourself in the unfortunate circumstance where you lose a quality international overseas-hire teacher, ensure that you obtain important information regarding the reason for their departure from your school. When international overseas-hire teachers leave the school, conduct an exit interview with them to determine their reason for leaving. This may be conducted by an administrator or through an external interviewer. Having this vital information will enable you to make adjustments to your administrative practices in an effort to retain quality international overseas-hire teachers.

Conclusion

International overseas-hire teacher turnover may be the result of many factors. Based on the analysis of global trends gleaned from empirical research data and this research study, it is evident that international schools need to place a high priority on

addressing international overseas-hire teacher turnover. We have learned that the high incidence of international overseas-hire teacher turnover has a detrimental impact on international schools' positive progress and on students (Varlas, 2013). School administrators from these schools can now take this knowledge and make more informed decisions about what steps they need to take to address the issues surrounding teacher turnover, which will ultimately contribute to improved student learning (Wood, 2014). EARCOS member schools and other international schools that are experiencing high teacher turnover, can potentially benefit from this research study and gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding international teacher turnover (Koech et al., 2014).

In addition, because there is limited current empirical data available on international overseas-hire teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools this study can contribute to the existing research base on international teacher turnover. This also study has the potential to lay the foundation for potential further exploration of international teachers', administrators' and students', perspectives on international overseas-hire teacher turnover in EARCOS member schools.

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