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Exploring challenges in overseas teachers' cross-cultural adjustment

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Opettajat muuttavat ulkomaille töihin enemmän kuin koskaan ennen. Kun opettaja muuttaa ulkomaille töihin, hän joutuu sopeutumaan uuteen työhön ja vieraaseen kulttuuriin. Tutkimus ulkomailla työskentelevien opettajien kokemuksista on vähäistä, vaikka heikko sopeutuminen on liitetty alisuoriutumiseen töissä sekä opettajien päätökseen luopua työstä. Tämän kirjallisuuskatsauksen tavoitteena on koota ja analysoida olemassa olevaa tutkimusta ulkomailla työskentelevien opettajien kokemista haasteista kulttuurienvälisessä sopeutumisessa. Tarkoitus on lisätä tietoa opettajien sopeutumisprosesseista, jotta sitä voitaisiin hyödyntää esimerkiksi koulutuksen tai muun tuen kehittämisessä.

Kirjallisuuskatsauksen tulokset osoittavat, että ulkomailla työskentelevät opettajat kohtaavat moninaisia haasteita sekä kohdemaan kulttuuriin että työhön sopeutumisessa. Näiden tuloksien perusteella ehdotetaan, että haasteita ei pitäisi vähätellä vaan pikemminkin opettajien pitäisi olettaa, että he tulevat kokemaan jonkin tason vaikeuksia sopeutumisessaan. Suurin osa ilmenevistä haasteista johtuu siitä, että opettajille tutut lähestymis- ja toimintatavat sekä uskomukset eivät enää päde uudessa kulttuurissa. Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan väittää, että sopeutuminen edellyttää opettajilta joustavuutta työssään sekä opettamiseen liittyvien ennakkokäsityksien kyseenalaistamista. Myös se, miten koulu yhteisöä johdetaan vaikuttaa opettajien sopeutumiseen. Johdolla on suuri merkitys siinä, miten koulutusta kehitetään ja millaista tukea on tarjolla sopeutumisen helpottamiseksi.

Avainsanat: kulttuurienvälinen sopeutuminen, kulttuuriin sopeutuminen, työhön sopeutuminen, opettaminen ulkomailla, ekspatriaatti opettajat, kulttuurišokki

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Exploring challenges in overseas teachers' cross-cultural adjustment (Anniina O'Rourke)

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The landscape of teaching has been undergoing drastic changes and teachers are taking up posts in schools overseas at higher rates than ever before. Teachers entering unfamiliar cultural contexts find themselves having to adjust to both a new work environment and a new host culture. Although poor adjustment has been linked to weaker job performance and higher turnover rates, the field of overseas teachers' experiences remains relatively unexplored. Henceforth the purpose of this literature review is to compile and analyze existing literature on overseas teachers' challenges to cross-cultural adjustment in order to further the understanding of teachers' adjustment processes. It is intended that this research, through a better understanding of challenges faced by teachers, may provide some basis for developing cross-cultural training and/or other methods of facilitating support, such as induction.

The findings of this literature review indicate that teachers working overseas experience various challenges in both host culture adjustment and work adjustment. It is suggested that as opposed to underestimating challenges, teachers ought to be prepared to experience some degree of difficulty in their relocation. Many of the challenges described derive from teachers' familiar approaches and beliefs being rendered inappropriate within their new cultural context. It is argued that in order to achieve successful adjustment, overseas teachers need to be flexible in their work and simultaneously confront their preconceived notions of teaching and what it means to be a teacher. Furthermore, leadership is also recognized as a significant factor in successful adjustment, especially for the purpose of providing suitable induction and/or other means of support for overseas teachers.

Keywords: cross-cultural adjustment, host culture adjustment, work adjustment, overseas teachers, expatriate teachers, culture shock

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1 Introduction

More so than ever before, teachers are looking for job opportunities outside of their national borders (Arber, Blackmore & Vongalis-Macrow, 2014). Teachers relocating overseas are navigating unfamiliar spaces, challenged by the changes to their personal and professional lives. Having worked as an interning teacher in both a national and international school within Japan, I was faced by cultures in and out of work that were completely unfamiliar to myself. I became compelled to re-examine the ways of teaching and living which I had previously become accustomed to. Through these experiences, I was led to reflect upon how overseas teachers' adjustment could be conceptualized, and how the consequent challenges of relocation might manifest in these teachers' lives.

The landscape of teaching has been undergoing drastic changes. While previously overseas teaching has often been synonymous with international school teachers, today various overseas school settings are inviting teachers to participate in entirely new working environments (Arber et al., 2014). Many national schools have begun to offer internationalized streams, while others look to introduce international perspectives in their national programs (Hill, 2006; Weenink, 2008). Some countries have also been exclusively recruiting overseas teachers as teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) (Neilsen, 2014). This is the case with many programs existing primarily in Asia, where English teaching is done by overseas-hire teachers, such as the NETs (Native-speaking English Teachers) in Hong Kong (Chu & Morrison, 2011) or the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) program in Japan (McConnell, 2000). This has meant that demands specifically for Anglo-Western teachers have been rising in many parts of the world and their outgoing mobility has subsequently been growing (Budrow & Tarc, 2018; Hrycak, 2015). In non-internationalized forms, there are also cases in which overseas teachers are hired to meet a lack of local teachers or as cheaper alternatives, as is the case in many U.S. urban schools (Dunn, 2011). As such, there exists a wide array of opportunities to relocate abroad, many of which teachers take advantage of to explore new fronts.

Prior research has shown that teachers relocating overseas face a variety of personal and professional challenges (see e.g. Halicioglu, 2015; Roskell, 2013). Overseas teachers could be said to experience a sort of "culture shock" (Bailey, 2015b), or more appropriately, "double shock" (Austin, 2007). They are, more often than not, having to adapt to not only new schools, but entirely new cultures in and out of work (Bailey, 2015a; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991;

Stirzaker, 2004). Navigating work and life in another culture hence necessitates adjustment to various cultural dimensions (Joslin, 2002). Peltokorpi & Froese (2012) describe this process as cross-cultural adjustment, whereby one begins to “feel more comfortable with the new culture and harmonize with it” (p.735). While cross-cultural adjustment is considered to be both a psychological and socio-cultural process (Ward & Kennedy, 1993), within the scope of this literature review I have chosen to focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of adjustment. The socio-cultural dimension of cross-cultural adjustment is further explored within two key domains: host culture adjustment, and work adjustment.

Poor adjustment by overseas teachers might not only provide a personal challenge in relocation, but it may consequently lessen the quality of a teacher’s work and, at worst, due to the nature of their job, have adverse outcomes on their environments: the school and students (Aydin, Toptaş, Demir, & Erdemli, 2019; Roskell, 2013). According to Joslin (2002), poorly adjusted teachers are not able to contribute as well and have weaker job performance. Additionally, Budrow and Tarc (2018) believe that “a teacher’s ability to navigate the local cultural context can dramatically affect how they function and are accepted as part of the school and school community” (p.882). If a teacher is unable to adjust to a new culture, they may similarly be unable to adjust to their work as a part of the culture. Furthermore, if cultural differences are not recognized, students’ learning could be compromised (Deveney, 2007). Research has also linked poor adjustment to the high turnover rates of overseas teachers (Burke, 2017; Chandler, 2010; Mancuso, Roberts & White, 2010; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Poor adjustment may henceforth have adverse effects further than the personal experiences of the teachers, making the realm of overseas teachers’ cross-cultural adjustment one valuable to explore.

The term “expatriate,” referring to persons who work outside of their home country, is commonly associated with overseas teachers (Aydin et al., 2019; Bunnel, 2017; Burke, 2017). Generally, expatriates are divided into two categories: organizational expatriates (OEs), who are sent abroad through companies they are working for in their home countries; and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), who relocate abroad on their own volition (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). Teachers moving overseas are similar to SIEs, as it is often individual choice which leads to their relocation. This means that teachers, like other SIEs, do not necessarily receive cross-cultural training (Joslin, 2002). However, when training is provided, results have indicated it may not be seen as adequate for the challenges faced by teachers (Aydin et al., 2019; Deveney, 2007). This suggests there may be a need to further develop cross-cultural training or other means of support for overseas teachers. However, Bunnel (2017) argues that the label of SIE is

not necessarily applicable to overseas teachers, as they are often assisted to an extent. This assistance may come in the form of “packages” which can include benefits such as accommodation, healthcare or free tuition for the teachers’ children (Aydin et al., 2019; Savva, 2017). Henceforth, the domain of teachers’ overseas relocation is additionally unique, and findings based on other SIEs might not necessarily be applicable to teachers’ experiences.

Despite poor adjustment being linked to both weaker job performance and higher turnover rates, little attention has been given to the challenges teachers face when relocating overseas (see e.g. Halicioglu, 2015). When discussed, it is often done so for the experiences of international school teachers (see e.g. Joslin, 2002; Sunder, 2013), yet even this field remains relatively under-researched (Bunnel, 2017). However, as previously indicated, overseas teaching extends much further than international schools, suggesting there exists a research-gap in the area of teachers’ overseas relocation experiences. While this literature review utilizes research on overseas teachers in all previously mentioned contexts, due to the sparsity of such research, this literature review additionally draws upon research conducted on other expatriates (primarily Froese, 2012; Froese, Peltokorpi & Ko, 2012; Peltokorpi, 2008; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012) and international students (see e.g. Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Kim, 2001). Furthermore, it is of note to mention that nearly all of the research is conducted with Westerners (often Anglophones), hence limiting the scope of experiences. The references used within this literature review are mainly collected from English peer-reviewed academic journals.

It must additionally be recognized that each teacher is respectively unique and will surely come across challenges derived from their characteristics and personality (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Hua, Zheng, Zhang & Fan, 2019; Peltokorpi, 2008; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012). These are not explored within the scope of this research. This literature review instead focuses on challenges identified in teachers’ experiences within existing research, which are discussed through the lens of socio-cultural adjustment. This is done in order to maintain clarity and to discuss experiences in a more collective manner in consideration of the possible challenges which may arise despite personal characteristics.

The purpose of this literature review is to compile and analyze existing literature on overseas teachers’ challenges to cross-cultural adjustment in order to further the understanding of teachers’ adjustment processes. Rather than a generalization, this literature review works to give

insight to how challenges manifest and are navigated by teachers. It is intended that this research, through a better understanding of challenges faced by teachers, may provide some basis for developing cross-cultural training and/or other methods of facilitating support, such as induction. As such, this literature review will address the following question:

1. *What kind of challenges has previous research acknowledged overseas teachers to face in their host culture adjustment and work adjustment?*

First and foremost, the concept of cross-cultural adjustment is defined in relation to overseas teachers and the use of the socio-cultural framework is further justified. Within this chapter, host culture adjustment is argued to comprise of two key domains: general adjustment and interaction adjustment. In the following chapter (2.1), challenges related to host culture adjustment are explored. The challenges to teachers' general adjustment are examined first, followed by an analysis of challenges to interaction adjustment. Interaction adjustment is discussed in relation to two areas: host language proficiency and interaction with host country nationals; and the bubble effect. The next chapter (2.2) discusses overseas teachers' challenges related to work adjustment. This chapter consists of five subchapters which address the key contexts in teachers' work environments in which challenges arise. The final chapter discusses the findings of this literature review, and their consequent implications. Limitations and suggestions for further research are additionally discussed within the final chapter.

2 Overseas teachers' cross-cultural adjustment

When entering new cultures, teachers will inevitably face challenges in adjusting to their new environments. Perhaps most famously, Oberg (1960) introduced the widely used term “culture shock” to describe the feelings that arise from relocation abroad. Oberg defined culture shock as an “occupational disease” characterized by “the confusion, disorientation, and disheartenment that accompanied intercultural contact and migration” (as cited in Austin, 2007, p.240). While it is in no way implied that the process of moving abroad is not strenuous, within this literature review the language of culture shock is actively strayed away from. This terminology communicates abnormality and severity, whereas, agreeing with Arbabanel (2009), these complicated feelings might be better understood as a normal part of cultural transitions. Henceforth these feelings can instead be seen as being a part of a process of adjustment.

Seeing adjustment as a process would imply that there is no one-time “cure-all” solution for arising challenges, nor that all challenges are permanent. As Chu and Morrison (2011) express it, “cross-cultural adjustment is a multi-dimensional, multi-theoried, multi-faceted concept that evolves and applies differentially over the duration of the sojourn [the relocation]” (p.498). They further suggest that precisely due to this, a brief induction is not sufficient support for overseas teachers (Chu & Morrison, 2011). Instead, as a process, cross-cultural adjustment could be understood as “the degree to which expatriates are psychologically comfortable and familiar with different aspects of a foreign culture” (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou as cited in Peltokorpi, 2008, p. 1589). Peltokorpi (2008) describes the process to involve “uncertainty reduction and change through which expatriates start to feel more comfortable with the new culture and begin to harmonize with it” (p. 1589). In sum, what cross-cultural adjustment communicates, is that individuals do indeed face challenges, however, these challenges become more manageable through a higher degree of adjustment. Viewing adjustment in this light allows for a further consideration of what a well-adjusted overseas teacher may look like, subsequently helping to map out the challenges inhibiting such development. Huff, Pingping & Gresch (2013) characterize a well-adjusted expatriate as someone who feels comfortable and experiences little stress in relation to their assignment within the host country. In contrast, Peltokorpi (2008) describes maladjusted expatriates as “unable and/or unwilling to accept and adjust their behavior to the host country behaviors, norms, and rules” (p. 1589).

Ward and Kennedy (1993) have argued that cross-cultural adjustment could be divided into two key categories: psychological and socio-cultural. While psychological adjustment is defined through one's individual emotional and mental state, taking into account the psychological comfort and familiarity felt in new environments, socio-cultural adjustment, on the other hand, is "situated within the behavioral domain and refers to the ability to 'fit in' or execute effective interactions in a [*sic*] new cultural surroundings" (Guðmundsdóttir, 2015, p.178). The focus within this research is on the latter, as psychological aspects of adjustment could be seen to be characterized by lived personal realities, which might arguably make the process of exploring shared experiences of teachers rather complex. Furthermore, it must also be recognized that factors such as personality or personal characteristics of teachers are not taken into account when looking the challenges they face. Instead, what is examined is how teachers might navigate through these challenges to varying degrees of success. Focus within the socio-cultural framework allows for a proactive examination of adjustment based on the experiences described by teachers relocating overseas, which is arguably more applicable to the development of cross-cultural training and induction for teachers.

Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) have identified three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment: general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment. In their research on foreign workers in South Korea, Froese et al. (2012) define these dimensions concisely. These definitions are used throughout this literature review. According to Froese et al. (2012), general adjustment involves the manner in which expatriates cope with living in a foreign country, i.e. "the degree of psychological comfort regarding the host culture's environment such as the climate, food, health care, housing conditions, and shopping" (p. 332). Whether moving near or far, the living conditions and environments of overseas teachers are bound to change to some extent, which may or may not amount to challenges they face. Interaction adjustment addresses the teachers' efforts to establish relationships with locals. Froese et al. (2012) describe it as "the degree of comfort associated with interacting with host country nationals (HCNs) inside and outside of work" (p.333). Finally, Froese et al. (2012) define work adjustment as "the degree of comfort regarding different expectations, performance standards, and work values" (p.333). Work adjustment is hence associated with the way teachers fit into the workplace, which in this context refers to the schools in which they teach. Peltokorpi (2008) divides these three dimensions into the "work and non-work domains of the expatriation experience" (p. 1590). Within this research, a model similar to Roskell's (2013) is followed, where general and interaction

adjustment are placed into non-work domains of overseas teaching, termed “host culture adjustment,” and work adjustment is placed into the work domain respectively, termed “work adjustment” (p.164). Albeit with varying terminology, this echoes Austin’s (2007) research on expatriate pharmacists, describing their experience as a “double shock” in which expatriates had to adapt to “both a new national and a new professional culture simultaneously” (p.239). While these domains are surely interconnected, in that they may overlap and influence each other, this division allows for an examination of overseas teachers’ experiences firstly from a cultural perspective, gaining a broader understanding of what they may experience holistically, and secondly from the unique perspective of their work as teachers.

2.1 Overseas teachers’ challenges related to host culture adjustment

2.1.1 General adjustment

General adjustment refers to adjustment regarding the host culture’s environment, including factors such as the “climate, food, healthcare, housing conditions, and shopping” (Froese et al., 2012, p. 332). When relocating abroad, in addition to their new working environments, the overseas teacher must adjust to “new, unfamiliar and known sets of routines, customs, values, food...and religions” (Madrid, Baldwin & Belbase, 2016, p. 337). Here it is emphasized, that as opposed to being static, the host culture includes a variety of cultural differences which, to the teacher, may vary from familiar to entirely new. Although research into expatriate withdrawal intentions suggests that general adjustment holds little predictive power for withdrawal, it is hard to imagine a poorly adjusted expatriate to be satisfied with their work assignment, or vice versa (Pinto, Cabral-Cadoso, & Werther, 2012). It is then presumable that successful general adjustment might enhance other dimensions of adjustment, as teachers have “less to worry about” in other areas of their life. Due to this, it is argued that it may be worthwhile to explore the challenges teachers may face in connection to general adjustment, or rather, that it should not be overlooked. Furthermore, whereas interaction and work adjustment are concerned with arguably more unpredictable and diverse environments “encompassing the different organizational, professional, regional, and departmental cultures that expatriates need to cope with when interacting and building relationships in their new workplaces” (Koveshnikov, Wechtler, & Dejoux, 2014, p. 8), preparation and/or support for challenges in general adjustment, on the other hand, may be easier to facilitate.

Based on previous literature, overseas teachers have cited various factors associated with general adjustment to provide challenges in settling into their new environments. For example, in the case of pre-service teachers during short-term study programmes abroad, a prominent aspect brought up was their sense of physical discomfort (Santoro & Major, 2012). Physical discomfort was associated with large crowds locally, and different housing conditions, such as sharing rooms or sleeping on the floor (Santoro & Major, 2012). In research on NETs living in Hong Kong, teachers reported discomfort in association to the climate, citing factors such as humidity and summer heat (Chu & Morrison, 2011). When researching international teachers' views, Roskell (2013) found similar responses, where teachers saw factors such as climate and transportation as challenging. However, notably, Roskell (2013) found that ten months into their stay, teachers voiced less complaints related to general adjustment, and often even found pride in how they had learned to adapt to local ways. This seems to suggest that challenges in general adjustment may be mitigated by the time spent in the host culture, as new routines and living conditions could slowly become normalized in teachers' lives.

The degree of closeness between a migrant's own and the new host culture has also been recognized to have either a mitigating or intensifying effect on the challenges faced when working overseas (Austin, 2007). This follows the assumption that the further away the new host culture is from one's own, the more difficulties one may experience in adjustment (Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). On the other hand, according to Peltokorpi (2008), "living and working is less stressful in culturally similar countries than in culturally distant countries because expatriates are likely to adjust more easily to countries that are similar to those where they have spent most of their lives" (p.1591). To use an illustrative example, if a Finnish teacher were to relocate to teach in Sweden, they would likely run into less challenges, than if they were to relocate to China, due to Swedish and Finnish cultures having a higher degree of closeness. However, Koveshnikov et al. (2014) argue that this ease in adjustment may only occur in general living environments and is not as applicable to interaction or work dimensions of adjustment. To apply this thought to the previous example, while Finland and Sweden might share similarities in aspects such as housing conditions, food, and climate, the facets of interaction and work might be much more unfamiliar to the teachers, thus provide greater challenges. Still, some believe that shorter cultural distance may also alleviate challenges to interaction adjustment, such as in cases of cultures which are similar socially. In these cases, cultural similarity might be used to predict and explain behavior by HCNs (Peltokorpi, 2008). Nevertheless, the concept of cultural distance would seem to signify importance for teachers moving

abroad, especially when teachers are relocating from cultures considered to be relatively different. Furthermore, while challenges to general adjustment may be lessened or diminished through time or cultural closeness, what is evident in the cases of all the above cited research, is that teachers often face challenges related to general adjustment.

However, one might question to what extent these challenges in general adjustment are quantifiable, and how this knowledge might be applicable for teachers' preparation or training. It is of value to recognize that as opposed to being static, cultural differences might be best viewed as dynamic and changing, as they are "rooted in the nuances of place and informed by the situation, interaction, and the physical environment" (Ferguson, 2011, p. 29). According to Ferguson (2011) using the term "cultural differences" does not consider these dynamic nuances, and instead communicates that knowledge of a given culture may be somehow measured. Ferguson (2011) further argues that this approach might strengthen stereotypes, and suggests it is instead valuable to consider aspects further than the observable differences. Similarly, Gunesch (2013) posits that cultural knowledge does not automatically lead to appreciation. This would seem to suggest that mere awareness or knowledge of cultural differences might not provide a sufficient basis for adjustment. Joslin (2002) proposes that teachers should rather "take steps to confront alternative ways of thinking and behaving to be aware of the complex ambiguity of exchange in 'foreign' cultures" (p.50). This instead implies a significant role, and perhaps challenge for the individual navigating within a new culture, emphasizing how cultural differences are interpreted and managed by the teacher. It may well be, that rather than solely recognizing differences, teachers may need to consider adapting their approaches to dissimilarity.

2.1.2 Interaction adjustment

Interaction adjustment is defined as "the degree of comfort associated with interacting with HCNs inside and outside of work" (Froese et al., 2012, p.333). The challenges which arise in interaction adjustment are related to language learning, communication, learning the novel culture, and building new connections (Hua et al., 2019). These are based on the belief that "the resources embedded in sojourners' [the teachers'] old social structures are either inappropriate or not applicable" (Hua et al., 2019, p.37). Interaction adjustment provides teachers with the opportunity to rebuild social networks and simultaneously gain a deeper understanding of the host culture, henceforth making it a valuable dimension to discuss. While teachers may interact with HCNs in and out of their work environment, for the purpose of clarity, interaction here is

discussed broadly in relation to overall interaction experiences. Interactions encountered within the work environments of teachers are expanded upon later when analyzing challenges related to work adjustment. Here interaction adjustment is discussed within two key areas: host language and interaction with host country nationals; and the bubble effect. Although the following sections focus on primarily interaction adjustment, language specifically is later discussed in relation to general and work adjustment as well.

Host language and interaction with host country nationals

Host language proficiency is recognized as a fundamental driving factor in facilitating successful interaction adjustment (Aydin et al., 2019; Froese, 2012; Masgoret, 2005; Peltokorpi, 2008; Savva, 2017). In their research on Anglophone educators working in international schools, Savva (2017) cites the issue of language as the most significant challenge faced by teachers. In the case of Anglophone teachers in Europe, language barriers were not as strong due to most Europeans having, at least, a basic command of English (Savva, 2017). However, teachers outside of western Europe, where English was not commonly spoken, faced notable challenges when communicating with HCNs (Savva, 2017). Masgoret (2005) makes a similar claim when assessing 127 British students who worked as short-term English instructors in Spain, stating “there is no doubt that one of the most important factors in determining effective communication with members of the host community, and arguably the most central one, is one’s ability to speak their language” (p.312). According to Masgoret (2005) some degree of language fluency in the host language is a requirement for cross-cultural communication. This is due to language skills being important in relation to performance of daily tasks, especially in cases where there is no English language support, as well as having a crucial role in establishing interpersonal relationships with HCNs.

Masgoret (2005) describes the relationship between host language proficiency and social interaction as reciprocal. According to Masgoret (2005), greater host language proficiency leads to increased interaction with the host community, which in turn leads to improved host language proficiency. While Aydin et al. (2019) similarly believe that integration with HCNs is necessary for developing host language proficiency, they found, in their research on overseas private school teachers in Turkey, that some teachers had no intention to learn Turkish despite the existence of language barriers (Aydin et al., 2019). This might imply that teachers themselves may not seek out language learning opportunities. However, notably, both host language profi-

ciency and interaction with the host community have been found to ease cross-cultural adjustment (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Masgoret, 2005), suggesting that overseas teachers' host language learning should not be neglected.

According to Kim (2001) contact with the host community can help foreigners to better understand the minds and behaviors of HCNs. In their research on international students, Hendrickson et al. (2011) further describe the former, proposing "they [the international students] begin to understand why people behave, communicate, and interact the way they do, thus previously unexplained behavior is put into context and can be interpreted more readily" (p.283). In support of this claim, Froese et al. (2012) found English language teachers who had more interaction with HCNs subsequently had both more positive attitudes towards the host culture, and increased learning opportunities for understanding cultural differences. In the case of international students, Ward and Kennedy (1993) similarly found students with more HCN contacts reported having improved communication competences, and fewer social difficulties, overall suggesting stronger adjustment. Furthermore, findings by Masgoret (2005) also note that language ability was positively correlated with socio-cultural adjustment and English instructors with more host community contact had fewer problems in socio-cultural adjustment. In agreement with the prior statements, Masgoret (2005) concludes that contact with host community would allow teachers the opportunity "to identify with members of the host community and gain a better understanding of the culture" (p.313). While teachers may perceive language learning itself a challenge to interaction adjustment, it is inconceivable that supporting overseas teachers' language learning would mitigate overall challenges in interaction adjustment, through contact with HCNs, and simultaneously through increased language learning opportunities.

Interaction with HCNs might also alleviate emotional challenges faced by overseas teachers. When relocating overseas, teachers are often also moving away from their current social network, in other words their friends and families. In their interviews with overseas international school teachers, Hrycak (2015) noted being away from family as the most commonly cited drawback of working abroad. SIEs in South Korea also brought up the concerns of feeling isolated (Froese, 2012). For NETs in Hong Kong, support from family, friends and colleagues was highlighted as important for overcoming stress and loneliness experienced during adjustment (Chu & Morrison, 2011). Although in this case, support was sought after from long-distance family and current western colleagues (Chu & Morrison, 2011), the loss of previous social communities and the value placed on support would seem to suggest that overseas teachers may

also benefit from friendships with HCNs. In support of this claim, when researching international students away from home, Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that students who had more contacts with HCNs reported feeling more socially connected and less homesick. Corresponding to the previous discussions, however, it is language which not only facilitates formation of relationships, but both their quality and quantity as well (Masgoret, 2005). Kim (2001) similarly posits that international students who are able to develop stronger ties with HCNs would have less difficulties in adjustment. However, Kim (2001) also highlights that even weaker ties might be significant for adjustment as they give insight to communication patterns of HCNs. What this all would seem to communicate in regards to interaction adjustment is that while interaction with HCNs poses challenges of its own, especially when one might need to learn a new language, building new connections within the host culture community can ultimately serve to alleviate challenges felt and also benefit both the interaction and overall adjustment of overseas teachers.

It is, however, important to note that forming new relationships with HCNs is not necessarily always made possible through merely sharing a common language. When describing reasons as to why they felt unsuccessful in establishing relationships, in addition to the language barriers, SIEs in South Korea also mentioned not having opportunities to socialize with HCNs (Froese, 2012). Furthermore, research has also shown that both international students and overseas teachers might face prejudice when relocating overseas (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Savva, 2017). Overseas teachers and international students alike have also reported feelings of being othered by HCNs (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Santoro & Majoro, 2012; Savva, 2017). NETs in Hong Kong for example saw “multilevel marginalization” as their most common problem, feeling that they were treated as “outsiders rather than as partners” (Chu & Morrison, 2011, p.497). Similarly, Australian pre-service teachers in India and South Korea described feeling uncomfortable with being “othered” (Santoro & Major, 2012). Santoro and Major (2012) add that for many pre-service teachers having been part of dominant cultural majority, these were their first experiences as the “other”. Savva (2017) notes similarly that Anglophone teachers in international schools experienced the feeling of being othered for the first time, particularly pointing out their differences in appearance. It is also of importance to note that many of these experiences come from teachers who were previously considered to be members of the dominant culture. One might contemplate how these challenges could appear for those coming from different backgrounds. Overall, the research suggests that barriers to interaction felt by those relocating overseas might not be related to language exclusively, which

could provide a greater challenge to interaction adjustment. It may very well be that the barriers felt to interaction with HCNs, whether language or social, might contribute to the bubble effect often experienced by overseas teachers (Bailey, 2015b; Bunnell, 2017; Harrington, 2007; Savva, 2017) which is elaborated on more in the following chapter.

The bubble effect

Research on overseas teachers consistently reveals reference to their experience of interaction as a “bubble,” a term which Savva (2017) describes as the “tendency of expatriates to congregate with their own kind” (p.581). According to Savva (2017), international school teachers often live in compounds provided by schools and are thus, quite literally, isolated from HCNs, interacting primarily with other overseas-hire staff living within the same compounds. Within other research on international schools, students and teachers describe the experience of living in a bubble as being separated and isolated from the host country and culture (Bailey, 2015b; Harrington, 2007). The bubble effect is also brought up in research by Bunnell (2017) and Joslin (2002). Harrington (2007) further explains the effect, suggesting

the temporary situation for many families combined with not knowing how long they will be staying, short term notice to leave, fleeting friendships as other families leave, plus the difficulties of life outside of the expatriate bubble, whether imagined or real, limits interactions with the host country. (p.98)

This might imply that the bubble effect may serve as a coping mechanism, and simultaneously as a challenge to interaction adjustment.

Overseas teachers are navigating within a variety of challenges that follow from living in a new culture, and thus might feel more comfortable with others who are undergoing the same experiences. Savva (2017) interprets this sort of grouping behavior as similar to the experience of immigrants in western Anglophone countries, where mono-cultural grouping behaviors “often create a sense of safety and comradery among individuals who share common bonds” (p. 581). While this shared reliance can work to ease the stress caused by challenges, as was the case for NETs who sought support from western colleagues (Chu & Morrison, 2011), an often overlooked consequence of the bubble effect is that it may ultimately impede the adjustment of overseas teachers. According to Kim (2001), having co-national contacts may alleviate immediate adjustment, yet hinder the long-term process. In agreement with Kim (2001), Joslin (2002) believes that although contacts with persons from similar cultural backgrounds might serve as

an anchor, if one retains their domestic mindset it may cripple their adjustment. According to Kim (2001) it is only through interaction with HCNs that a deeper understanding of the host culture may occur.

Contacts with HCNs can help overseas teachers better understand the novel culture, suggesting that those without HCN contacts may face more struggles in their adjustment. In support of this claim, Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that international students with a higher ratio of co-nationals in their social networks reported “lower satisfaction and feelings of social connectedness” as opposed to those who had a higher ratio of HCNs in their networks (p.290). Similarly, Savva (2017) found that international school teachers with more HCN contacts were able to adjust better, or rather, break free of the bubble. Furthermore, in some cases the bubble effect may lead to the formation of negative perceptions towards the host culture, a sort of “rejection” of adjustment. This is perhaps what occurred in research by Roskell (2013), which found co-national groups of international school teachers to be tense, irritable and negative. If the bubble were to provide a place for overseas teachers to share negative experiences, this might in cases lead to the reassurance of negative perceptions. At worst, negative experiences might even lead to overseas teachers viewing the host culture as inferior (Peltokorpi, 2008). Henceforth, while perhaps alleviating struggles in the short-term, the bubble effect faced by overseas teachers might instead, in the long-term, prove to be a considerable challenge to their interaction adjustment. However, a question which must be considered is: what if overseas teachers themselves do not recognize this as a challenge?

Host language in general adjustment and work adjustment

While previously examined within the dimension of interaction adjustment, host language proficiency is also associated with general adjustment and work adjustment. Due to host language proficiency facilitating performance of daily tasks, it is believed to support general adjustment (Froese, 2012; Peltokorpi, 2008). In Froese’s (2012) research on SIE academics living in South Korea, 15 out of 30 respondents mentioned their lack of language fluency to cause difficulties in their completion of daily activities. Expatriates mentioned their need to seek assistance from teaching assistants, friends, or relatives when buying goods, renting houses and performing other daily tasks (Froese, 2012). In their research on 110 expatriates living in Japan, Peltokorpi (2008) found similar results, concluding Japanese language proficiency to be the most significant determinant of host culture adjustment. While in this case, Peltokorpi (2008) related lan-

guage proficiency more strongly to facilitate interaction adjustment, they highlighted the importance of language proficiency in areas such as retrieving information, ordering food or asking for directions.

However, language proficiency has also been found to be a negative predictor of work adjustment. Froese (2012) argues that in cases where English is sufficient for work (e.g. in international organizations), host country language skills hold significance for only general and interaction adjustment. Similarly, Froese et al. (2012) argue that for English language teachers, host country language proficiency may not influence work adjustment, due to their main task being to teach English. When teachers work in national schools, or in schools which incorporate the host language, one might conversely assume a lack of language skills to provide challenges in work adjustment. The research thus seems to suggest that although host language proficiency is most commonly associated with interaction adjustment, it may have a varying degree of influence on challenges that arise in all facets of adjustment, depending on for example location or job assignment.

2.2 Overseas teachers' challenges related to work adjustment

Work adjustment is defined as “the degree of comfort regarding different expectations, performance standards, and work values” (Froese et al., 2012, p.333). When relocating overseas, in addition to having to adjust to an entirely new host culture, teachers are consequently required to adapt to a new working environment. For teachers this means, as described by Madrid et al. (2016), having to navigate a new educational system, while simultaneously “managing emotional reactions associated with understanding culture, and how culture manifests itself in classroom life” (p.338). This highlights the unique situation which overseas teachers often face, that is, encountering the host culture within their work. In contrast to most OEs, who might work in international organizations having relatively similar assignments as they did previously, overseas teachers, whether employed in national or international schools, must become accustomed to a different school curriculum, philosophy and policy; an unfamiliar student body; new colleagues; and new leadership.

What additionally makes work adjustment perhaps the most significant dimension of overseas teachers' cross-cultural adjustment, is that it is often the key determinant in turnover. When researching international school teachers, Roskell (2013) found that as opposed to host culture adjustment, work adjustment was more likely to influence teachers' decisions on whether to

terminate their contract. Similarly, in their research on 166 OEs, Pinto et al. (2012) found that only work adjustment predicted withdrawal intentions. According to Peltokorpi (2008), “If expatriates are satisfied with their jobs, their motivation to perform well and remain abroad is higher” (p.1590). This would seem to suggest that while host culture adjustment may provide significant personal challenges, it is ultimately work adjustment that determines whether employment is continued.

While previous sections have considered challenges faced by teachers in their life outside of work, this section aims to explore and analyze the professional challenges that arise from working overseas. These challenges will be explored within the key contexts in which they arise, which are divided into the following sub-sections: an unfamiliar school philosophy, curriculum and policy; challenges related to student diversity; teachers feeling de-skilled; stratified staffrooms; and lack of supportive leadership.

2.2.1 Unfamiliar school philosophy, curriculum and policy

Overseas teachers have varying levels of knowledge and expertise, and may often assume that the overseas school is similar to the schools in their home country (Joslin, 2002). For instance, several international schools often share the same, or a similar curriculum, thus offering some degree of consistency for international school teachers (Hayden, 2006). Yet, it may be naïve to see this as indicative of success. In their study on international school teachers in Malaysia, Bailey (2015b) found that while teachers who had experience in similar curricula felt it presented few challenges, they felt inexperienced in other areas of teaching. Even with similar curricula, international schools operate within a space where different cultures intermingle. There may be a dominant cultural ethos, yet the host country culture may similarly influence the school culture, making it unique to the specific school (Allan, 2002). Assuming schools operate similarly based on a shared curriculum might thus lead to “false hope”. According to Roskell (2013), international school teachers who do not anticipate difficulties, are often more likely to have unrealistic expectations. When these expectations are not met, teachers might end up being more dissatisfied with outcomes (Roskell, 2013). Joslin (2002) believes that recognizing and accepting dissimilarity is an important step of work adjustment, as it allows for the necessary flexibility in encountering variation.

Teaching overseas, both in international and national schools, requires flexibility in order to reframe and adapt teaching according to the new cultural context (Joslin, 2002). Teachers might

feel challenged by having to adjust what has previously been acceptable to them. For example, in research by Sunder (2013), international school teachers in Dubai brought up concerns about not being able to present certain texts due to having to maintain local cultural sensitivity. De-Beer similarly notes that teachers who move to the Middle East may face difficulties in accepting censorship in schools (as cited in Halicioglu, 2015, p. 249). In the case of international school teachers in Malaysia, teachers reported “‘playing it safe’ in their classrooms and in their clothing, because they were unsure of where the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour lay in the new culture” (Bailey, 2015b, p.95). According to Joslin (2002) “if a teacher is to present cultural interpretations of the context of the curriculum in an informed way, then he or she needs to have a mindset that allows this freedom of thought,” calling it “a process that requires the teacher to challenge their own way of thinking” (p.52). This suggests that rather than playing it safe, teachers must be reflexive in their work within the novel culture. Hence, the challenge may not necessarily be that teachers are restricted in how they teach due to expectations set by the school, but rather in that they must engage in deep reflection in order to form new ways of teaching appropriate to their new context.

The ways in which schools overseas operate, including their methods of employment and policies, may also provide challenges to teachers. For many overseas teachers, their employment is seen as temporary (Bunnel, 2017). Neilsen (2014) notes the impermanence and lack of job security as a significant challenge faced by overseas TESOL teachers. Similarly, Hrycak (2015) highlights lack of job security as a difficulty faced by international school teachers. Another challenge brought up by international school teachers in Hrycak’s (2015) research was working in profit-led schools, i.e. private schools. Working in private schools may pose challenges to overseas teachers, as they are often having to navigate expectations of their schools and stakeholders, including parents. According to Harrington (2007), “parents and their employers have buying power and consumer needs, which the school seeks to satisfy with its operations” (p.33). In research by Aydin et al. (2019), although overseas-hire teachers working in private schools in Turkey felt that parents were generally friendlier than in their previous experiences, they noted that parents often intervened with and questioned their teaching. The interferences by parents might become more challenging if parents perceive themselves to have higher status in contrast to teachers, as is often the case with private international schools (Bunnel, 2017). The school’s recruitment policies may also center around demands of parents, often favoring western-trained English-speaking teachers (Slough-Kuss, 2014). This might suggest that if a teacher in a private school did not meet the expectations of parents, it could present a heavy challenge

to teachers feeling welcome at these schools. Furthermore, although international schools often have a vast range of nationalities and make attempts to be multicultural, many of them are primarily mono-cultural in terms of policies and philosophies, creating a dissonance between the cultural differences of the school culture, students and families (Harrington, 2007), where overseas teachers might be caught in the crossfire trying to meet conflicting expectations.

2.2.2 Challenges related to student diversity

When entering new classrooms overseas, teachers in both international and national schools will inevitably come across students with cultural backgrounds varying from their own. In national schools the majority of students will be HCNs. However, nowadays even many national schools will also have students from other countries, including immigrants or descendants whose parents are from overseas (Hill, 2006). International schools, on the other hand, may range from having considerably culturally diverse student bodies to largely mono-cultural ones (Allan, 2002; Harrington, 2007; Hill, 2006). Students in international schools might be HCNs, who are having their identities (culturally and linguistically) challenged through entering a new school culture (Bailey, 2015b; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008), or termed “third-culture kids (TCKs)” whose identities have developed often detached from one single culture or country due to having lived abroad through their formative years (Harrington, 2007). According to Bailey (2015b), the variance in the cultural makeup of international schools might depend on whether there are tuition costs or if HCNs are restricted from enrollment. Some international schools may also be directed at students from a specific nation, sometimes HCNs (Hill, 2006). Nevertheless, even in cases of generally mono-national schools (international or national), more often than not, students have their own diverse cultural backgrounds (Hill, 2006). It would seem that regardless of the school’s cultural context or the makeup of nationalities, overseas teachers ought to be prepared to encounter a diverse range of students.

Navigating new teacher-student relationships within these culturally diverse contexts may provide teachers with significant challenges to their work adjustment. Similar to their day-to-day life in a new country, teachers may come across language barriers in their interactions with students. Particularly TESOL teachers not fluent in the host language may struggle communicating with their students due to the students’ limited English proficiency. However, even Eng-

lish-speaking overseas teachers in international schools may run into similar struggles. For instance, both Sunder (2013) and Bailey (2015b) found international school teachers to face difficulties when teaching due to a majority of students not speaking English as their first language.

Difficulties may also arise when teachers are faced with cultural differences and consequent misunderstandings. When researching overseas teachers working in U.S. urban schools, Dunn (2011) believed teachers may have “significant problems understanding and connecting to the culture of Urban American students” (p.3). Following their research, Dunn (2011) found that several respondents felt challenged by student attitudes and behaviors, having described them as lazy and disengaged. The disparity in perspectives between teachers and students would often manifest as conflict within the classroom (Dunn, 2011). If teachers are to perceive cultural differences as unfavorable, then it is likely they will perceive it as a challenge. In the case of overseas teachers working in an international school in Thailand, Deveney (2007) found some teachers who did not consider themselves well trained for teaching diverse classes would often lower their expectations for HCN students “to make it easier for them” (p.321). These sort of generalizing interpretations of cultural groups may diminish students’ learning opportunities, and simultaneously create misunderstandings between teachers and students. This suggests that rather than the sole existence of variance, a lack of understanding might instead prove to be a more significant challenge.

Some teachers may also feel unprepared to teach diverse classrooms (Deveney, 2007; Halse & Baumgart, 2000; Santoro & Major, 2012). In research by both Deveney (2007) and Santoro and Major (2012), a portion of teachers seemed to lack an understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, which recognize that a student’s cultural background might influence them as learners. However, in order for teachers to avoid conflict between themselves and their students, and to effectively teach diverse classrooms, they must come to the understanding that cultural background does have an impact on learning, and students’ backgrounds might be vastly different to that of their own. It could be said that teachers need to adapt and to “adjust” the way in which they typically work. When speaking of overseas teachers, Burke (2017) similarly concludes, “the expatriate teacher is confronted with learners whose cultural contexts differ from the teacher’s own upbringing; this forces the expatriate teacher to consider how and to what extent adaptation of his/her practice is required” (p.220). Henceforth, teachers who move past shallow interpretations are instead faced by a different dilemma, the challenge of fostering a culturally responsive pedagogy.

2.2.3 Teachers feeling de-skilled

In addition to adapting their teaching methods according to the expectations of the school, overseas teachers must also be ready to adapt their teaching to a culturally diverse classroom (Budrow & Tarc, 2018). It would seem that teachers themselves, whether consciously or subconsciously, are aware of this need. This is perhaps best illustrated through the previously mentioned research by Deveney (2007) on international school teachers, where although some teachers believed children to learn in “more or less the same ways,” the majority of teachers nevertheless reported having changed their teaching strategies (Deveney, 2007, p.323). In sum, this implies the overseas teachers’ previous skills might not be applicable or transferable to the new context. However, this sort of work adjustment is perhaps easier said than done and it may pose a significant challenge to the overseas teacher. According to Stirzaker (2004), a common source of stress for teachers who relocate is feeling “unexpectedly ‘de-skilled’” due to new students reacting differently (p.32). Ramsey (1998) similarly believes teachers may experience considerable stress when confronted by the fact their methods no longer work in a culturally unfamiliar classroom. Roskell (2013) further suggests, that feelings of being de-skilled might heavily influence teachers’ decisions on whether or not to continue employment.

Each classroom, whether national or international, is undoubtedly unique, however, research has also shown many cultures to favor certain teaching styles and methods. In the case of overseas teachers in Turkey, Aydin et al. (2019) found that local teachers emphasized teacher-centered approaches, whereas overseas teachers had previously been more closely involved with student-centered approaches. Classroom management may also vary among divergent cultures and hence be a source of difficulty for overseas teachers (Dunn, 2011). While in western countries, teachers might be more focused on individual students, Japanese teachers for example, often instead prioritize group harmony (Shimahara, 2002). If a teacher is unfamiliar with what students are conversely accustomed to, the teacher might feel inexperienced in teaching them. An inability to accept past methods as no longer applicable might, at worst, lead to adverse outcomes in both teaching and adjustment. This was what might have partially occurred for international school teachers in Roskell’s (2013) research. Many of these teachers struggled to let go of their past practices that were central to their work identity, such as methods of assessment, and with time felt resigned, completing only the bare minimum required from them at their school (Roskell, 2013).

However, teachers may not necessarily have to abandon old practices. In their research on international school teachers in the U.S., Tippins, Hammond and Hutchison (2006) found teachers to have “hybridized” their methods of practice and assessment in accordance to school expectations. Taking on a flexible approach may even lead to valuable professional and personal development. In research by Alfaro and Quezada (2009), while teacher students completing teaching practices in indigenous communities in Mexico had been challenged to “redefine their pedagogy,” this was what ultimately led them to transformative experiences, gaining a deeper understanding of their own cultural norms and beliefs (p.57). Similarly, as opposed to feeling de-skilled, overseas teachers at an international school in Bailey’s (2015b) research felt re-skilled and noted experiencing culture shock in the classroom as a significant driving force for them to reconceptualize their teaching. Furthermore, when interviewing students and staff of the school, Bailey (2015b) found that while approaches of local and overseas teachers were recognized as different, students saw them as complementary, highlighting this as a strength of the school. Henceforth, the challenges here provided to work adjustment, when met with flexibility, could instead facilitate meaningful work adjustment.

2.2.4 Stratified staffrooms

Overseas teachers are just as likely to encounter diversity within their staffrooms as they are in their classrooms. It could be said, that previously mentioned language barriers and cultural misunderstandings may be present in the staffroom when interacting with HCNs and possibly other overseas-hire teachers. If teachers are not regarded as partners, but rather outsiders, which was the case for NETs in Hong Kong (Chu & Morrison, 2011), they might not be able to participate equally in the work environment. Similarly, prior research on HCN teachers’ attitudes towards JET teachers revealed varying perspectives, ranging from considering them to bring a breath of fresh air to seeing them as a “virus” that must be contained (McConnel, 2000, p.189). If an overseas teacher does not feel welcome among staff, it may surely provide a significant challenge to successful work adjustment.

Furthermore, divisions among staff may cause the previously mentioned bubble effect to extend to relationships between overseas-hire teachers and HCNs. As discussed earlier, overseas teachers are likely to interact among each other more due to their shared experience of having to adjust to the novel culture. In research by Bailey (2015a), this divide existed in the staffroom as well. Interviewed international school teachers noted strong stratification in staffrooms,

where the divide between overseas-hire teachers and local staff was much stronger than divisions between overseas-hire teachers based on nationality (Bailey, 2015a). Bailey (2015a) argued that rather than being based on cultural differences, this split occurred due to pedagogical differences. Overseas-hire staff perceived themselves as having a more advanced approach, characterized by western values, whereas local staff was described as old-fashioned, with inferior approaches (Bailey, 2015a). Similarly, Lai, Li and Gong (2016) found that in an international school located in Hong Kong, professional learning was “characterized by a predominant one-way influence from the West to the East” which led to Chinese teachers being positioned as learners, rather than as equal contributors (p.19). Inequality between overseas teachers and local teachers is also reinforced by the fact that, predominantly in international schools, western-trained Anglophone teachers often receive higher pay and greater benefits (such as health insurance or free education) despite doing the same work as their local counterparts (Aydin, et al., 2019; Canterford, 2003; Savva, 2017). Western overseas teachers might hence be perceived as more favorable, leading to further possible tensions among staff. Additionally, overseas-hire staff who do not pertain to this group of western Anglophone teachers may run into challenges in their work adjustment similar to the experience of local-hire teachers, that is, not feeling equal.

Yet one may question what challenge this might pose to the work adjustment of an overseas western-trained Anglophone teacher. Although western overseas teachers may not necessarily recognize this inequality as a challenge, especially if they are comfortable in social circles with other overseas-hire staff, Bailey (2015a) argues “a stratified staffroom in which one group of teachers feels re-skilled and invigorated, while local teachers are constructed as unskilled in expatriate discourse, cannot be facilitating the optimum learning environment” (p.14). Hence, the challenge might instead come from the fact that teachers are not necessarily opening themselves up to the opportunity to learn from each other, which might be particularly useful especially for overseas teachers who are navigating the various difficulties brought on in work adjustment. According to Lai et al. (2016), enhancing interaction between staff who have different cultural backgrounds may not only lead to a stronger sense of connectedness, but it may further provide all teachers with rich resources. Overseas teachers struggling to adapt their teaching methods might especially benefit from learning through their HCN peers. Furthermore, if overseas teachers were able to develop friendly relations with local staff, they might experience

alleviated challenges in overall adjustment due to the previously discussed benefits of interaction with HCNs. Henceforth, it might be said that fostering inclusive staffrooms where teachers are viewed as equals, could work to support the overall adjustment process of overseas teachers.

2.2.5 Lack of supportive leadership

It is important to recognize that although teachers might need to adjust their approaches and attitudes in order to achieve successful work adjustment, when teachers enter new countries, they are navigating through a stressful process primarily by themselves. Because of this, overseas teachers will often rely on the support from their schools (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). For international school teachers in Roskell's (2013) research, the principal was reported as the main reason for teachers ending contracts prematurely. Odland and Ruzicka (2009) came to a similar conclusion when researching 281 overseas international school teachers, noting administrative leadership as the most influential factor in teachers' decisions to leave the school. Specifically, whether leadership was regarded as supportive seems to have had strong implications for the continuation of employment.

Many of the challenges faced by teachers in work adjustment might simply be out of their control, or teachers are not necessarily able to actualize change as a result of the stress they are undergoing. While Roskell (2013) had found that overseas international school teachers were unable to adjust their teaching, it is of significance that these teachers similarly reported a lack of support from leadership. Roskell (2013) argues, that "it is important for school leaders to understand that, during the crisis stage, resistance to the new host country and unfamiliar work practices is to be expected as sojourners [teachers] struggle to adjust and to assimilate the new beliefs and values" (p.169). Much like the overseas teachers, school leadership might have to recognize their need to adapt to the varied backgrounds of their staff, including the overseas teacher navigating through an unfamiliar environment. While teachers are encountering unpredictable challenges in their work life, it is leaders who might have an ability to facilitate change, through for example proposing solutions or initiatives (Slough-Kuss, 2014). To further illustrate this through an example, teachers might not individually be able to transform stratified staffrooms, but leadership can provide support for fostering an inclusive space through encouraging and facilitating collaboration. If overseas teachers regard leadership as supportive, they are more likely to continue employment (Mancuso et al., 2010). Henceforth, the implications for the role of leadership in overseas teachers' work adjustment are strong.

3 Discussion

The purpose of this literature review was to comprehensively compile and analyze existing research on challenges experienced by overseas teachers across two key domains of socio-cultural cross-cultural adjustment: host culture adjustment and work adjustment. These challenges have been discussed within three dimensions: general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment. The research question asked what kind of challenges previous literature had acknowledged teachers to face in their host culture adjustment (including general and interaction adjustment) and work adjustment. In this chapter the findings are discussed across all three dimensions. After summarizing the findings presented by this literature review, the implications, limitations and suggestions for further research are also explored.

In the dimension of general adjustment, overseas teachers experience a wide range of challenges. Often these challenges are related to teachers' physical environment, such as their living conditions (Santoro & Major, 2012), the climate (Chu & Morrison, 2011), or the local means of transportation (Roskell, 2013). These challenges were in some cases mitigated by time, as teachers would through their stay become accustomed to their new environments (Roskell, 2013). The impact of the degree of closeness between cultures was also discussed. How similar, or dissimilar cultures are to each other (i.e. how "far" they are from each other) seems to have either an alleviating or amplifying influence on challenges to general adjustment. Teachers relocating from similar cultures are less likely to experience challenges, versus those relocating from vastly different cultures (Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Peltokorpi 2008; Ward et al., 2001). The concept of cultural distance, however, might not be applicable to interaction or work adjustment, as these dimensions are arguably more unpredictable. However, whether or not cultural differences may be quantified, and to what degree knowledge can influence adjustment was brought into question. What was suggested, is that knowledge alone is not enough and may even lead to upholding negative stereotypes. This instead highlights the role of the individual, i.e. the teacher, in how they interpret and approach differences.

In the dimension of interaction adjustment, three interrelated challenges came to light: host language learning, interaction with HCNs and the bubble effect. Host language, if not spoken by the teacher, has been cited as one of the most significant challenges faced by teachers relocating overseas, as not knowing the host language can limit teachers' interaction with the host culture, including their interaction with HCNs (Aydin et al., 2019; Froese, 2012; Masgoret,

2005; Peltokorpi, 2008; Savva, 2017). However, notably, Masgoret (2005) describes the relationship between host language proficiency and interaction with HCNs as reciprocal. They argue that greater host language proficiency will lead to more interaction with HCNs, which in turn leads to increased language proficiency (Masgoret, 2005). Hence, the challenges of interaction adjustment might be alleviated if an overseas teacher engages in both language learning and interaction with HCNs. Furthermore, interaction with HCNs is found to possibly alleviate other challenges felt by overseas teachers, as through communication, teachers may better identify with the host culture, leading to increased understanding of cultural differences (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2011). Additionally, it was noted that overseas teachers often face emotional challenges due to the fact that through relocation they simultaneously move away from their existing social network. Hence, interaction with HCNs might provide overseas teachers with much needed companionship and support. However, interaction with HCNs might be limited if overseas teachers experience discrimination or othering, ultimately reinforcing challenges to interaction adjustment.

One way in which overseas teachers may respond to challenges in interaction adjustment is through grouping together, forming the so-called bubble effect. These close-knit communities of overseas-hire teachers form through shared experiences that come from relocation, and can often provide teachers with new social networks bringing them substantial emotional support. However, these bubbles are often seen to be isolated from the host culture (Bailey, 2015b; Harrington, 2007). Henceforth, it can be concluded that they may serve as an obstacle to successful interaction adjustment, as living in isolation does not provide teachers with the opportunity to interact with HCNs, and in worst cases may even lead to negative perceptions towards the host culture (Bailey, 2015a; Roskell, 2013), thus rejecting adjustment.

In this literature review the influence of host language learning was also discussed in reference to the two other dimensions of adjustment, general and work adjustment. What is of significance, is that host language proficiency may mitigate challenges to general adjustment, as the completion of daily tasks may become easier (Froese, 2012; Peltokorpi, 2008). However, host language proficiency will not necessarily facilitate work adjustment if teachers are navigating through their work within a language they are fluent in (Froese, 2012).

The dimension of work adjustment was discussed within the framework of five core contexts: the school (including school philosophy, curriculum and policy), the students, the teaching, the staff and the leadership. In the case of schools, although international schools in particular may

share similar curricula, teachers nevertheless often struggle in other areas of teaching as the curriculum is adopted within the culture of the school. Furthermore, Roskell (2013) suggests that if teachers do not expect difficulties, they end up being more likely to be dissatisfied with outcomes. According to Joslin (2002), if a teacher instead accepts dissimilarity, they can be more flexible in their work. This is necessary especially if teachers feel challenged by the fact that what has been acceptable previously, is no longer suitable in their new context. At worst, not knowing what is acceptable may lead to teachers “playing it safe” in their classrooms. (Bailey, 2015b, p.95). This may imply teachers are not adapting their methods, possibly disadvantaging students and leading to poorer work adjustment on the teacher’s part. Additionally, the ways in which overseas schools operate might also be a significant source of challenges for teachers. For example, short contracts may lead to lack of job security (Bunnel, 2017; Neilsen, 2014). Working in private schools may also be particularly challenging, as teachers have to navigate expectations and demands of both schools and stakeholders i.e. parents in this case.

The students whom overseas teachers come to teach often have vastly differing cultural backgrounds to that of the teacher. This creates significant challenges to teachers’ work adjustment, as teachers might encounter language barriers or cultural differences and/or consequent misunderstandings. Here, a lack of understanding was recognized as a more significant challenge than the existence of cultural variance. Some teachers were also found to feel unprepared to teach diverse classrooms (Deveney, 2007; Halse & Baumgart, 2000; Santoro & Major, 2012). However, to avoid cultural misunderstands, it was suggested teachers should instead adapt a culturally responsive pedagogy which recognizes that the students background influences them as learners (Deveney, 2007; Santoro & Major, 2012). By adapting their teaching to be more appropriate for this new cultural context, i.e. acknowledging students’ diverse backgrounds, challenges faced in the classroom might be mitigated.

Although teachers might be aware of their need to change the way in which they teach (Deveney, 2007), fostering a culturally responsive pedagogy itself is a challenge faced by teachers in their work adjustment. When students react to their approaches to teaching and students differently, overseas teachers often find themselves feel de-skilled (Stirzaker, 2004). Although it is recognized that each classroom is undoubtedly unique, some specific teaching approaches are found to be favored in different cultural contexts. For example, local teachers in Turkey were found to favor teacher-centered approaches, whereas overseas teachers had previously taught a more student-centered approach (Aydin et al., 2011). If a teacher is unfamiliar to methods commonly used in a new cultural context, they may struggle and consequently lower the

quality of their teaching. However, it is suggested that teachers do not necessarily need to abandon their old teaching methods, rather they might be hybridized. If a teacher were to take a more flexible approach, they might also experience valuable professional and personal development, feeling “re-skilled” instead of de-skilled.

In addition to classrooms, teachers will also inevitably come across diversity in their new staffrooms. Aside from language barriers and cultural misunderstandings, teachers might not feel welcome in their staffrooms due to local staffs’ opinions on them (Chu & Morrison, 2011; McConnel, 2000). Especially for international school teachers, it seems to be the case that staffrooms are highly stratified (Bailey, 2015a; Lai et al., 2016). Bailey (2015a) believes the divide between local staff and overseas-hire teachers to come about due to pedagogical differences. Western-trained overseas teachers in particular may view their teaching approach as superior, positioning the local staff as learners rather than as equals (Bailey, 2015a; Lai et al., 2015). This inequality might be further reinforced by the higher salaries and benefits received by Western-trained teachers. Overseas teachers who do not belong in the group of western-trained Anglo-phone teachers might also hence struggle in their work adjustment due to not being valued equally. Furthermore, it is argued that while the western teacher might not recognize this as a challenge, the challenge posed to them instead is their inability to open themselves up to the opportunity of learning from others. Lai et al. (2016) suggest that interaction between staff from different cultural backgrounds may lead to both a stronger sense of connectedness and provide overseas staff with rich resources. As overseas teachers are often struggling to adapt their teaching methods, they might benefit from learning from their HCN peers. Furthermore, overseas teachers might also benefit from the support and companionship provided by HCN staff, hence mitigating challenges to the overall process of adjustment.

Overseas teachers often rely heavily on their schools for support (Ozland & Ruzicka, 2009), and because of this, whether leaders are supportive or not can provide a significant challenge to overseas teachers’ work adjustment. Leadership is additionally regarded as one of the most influential factors in overseas teachers’ decisions to continue employment (Ozland & Ruzicka, 2009; Roskell, 2013). It is hence argued that school leadership must come to recognize that teachers will struggle in their new environments, as leaders have the ability to facilitate change, through for example fostering inclusive and collaborative staffrooms. Furthermore, specifically supportive leadership was also linked to higher retention rates (Mancuso et al., 2010), suggesting that the role of supportive leadership is crucial for overseas teachers work adjustment.

The findings of this literature review add to the notion that teachers do indeed face a variety of challenges within all three domains of adjustment. Similar to findings by Austin (2007), teachers' experiences here displayed the need to adjust to both a new host culture and work environment. Further, what this literature review seems to communicate is that rather than there being a way to minimize challenges, teachers ought to be prepared to experience some degree of difficulty when relocating overseas. In the same vein, Joslin (2002) argues that "a period of anxiety needs to be expected, understood and managed for it can form part of a successful process of adaptation and should be viewed as neither a weakness nor an indicator of future international success" (p.49). In agreement with Joslin (2002), Ferguson (2011) proposes that "it is uncertainty and placelessness with which one must become familiar" (p.38). Instead of merely reaction to challenges, Hua et al. (2019) suggest teachers might proactively address these challenges and shape their behavior accordingly.

In other words, overseas teachers might need to be flexible and ready to accept that their pre-conceived notions of what has been acceptable or normal, may no longer apply to their new surroundings. Flexibility is indeed a recurrent theme that comes through in many of the challenges to both host culture adjustment and work adjustment. Similar to how previous social skills are no longer applicable (Hua et al., 2019), teachers' ways of teaching might also not work in their new context (Bailey, 2015b; Burke, 2017; Stirzaker, 2004). Returning to Joslin's (2002) argument, "the individual needs to take steps to confront alternative ways of thinking and behaving, to be aware of the complex ambiguity of exchange in foreign cultures" (p.50). It seems rather than relying on old structures, in an out of work life, the overseas teacher might instead need to critically examine them within this new environment in order to achieve a more successful adjustment.

This literature review has heavy implications for the role of leadership and organizational support for overseas teachers. While some challenges and consequent stresses might be negotiated by the individual approaches of overseas teachers, i.e. through flexibility, leaders are capable of bringing about concrete change that can work to alleviate the difficulties of relocation. If leaders are unable to accept or recognize the struggles of overseas-hire teachers, they might be unable to accommodate their needs. According to Stirzaker (2004) every teacher deserves and requires suitable induction, suggesting that all teachers need "time to adjust to an unfamiliar context, and that this necessary process of redefining their expertise to be more appropriate to their new situation could be assisted with a properly planned programme of orientation" (p.32).

Induction or orientation could be used as a means to acknowledge teachers struggles and provide them with a more comprehensive understanding of school expectations. Based on the findings of this literature review, appropriate orientation or induction might additionally include offering language learning opportunities, as language proficiency is likely to facilitate both interaction and general adjustment. Furthermore, leadership may be able to address the issue of stratified staffrooms by providing teachers with further opportunities to collaborate and interact. Valuing both overseas-hire staff and local-hire staff can similarly work to create a more equal and opportune learning environment for all teachers.

Through analyzing the experiences of challenges faced by overseas teachers in their cross-cultural adjustment, the findings of this literature review have hopefully added to the understanding of this relatively under-researched field and provided useful background knowledge for preparing appropriate support. The research which was utilized within this literature review has been primarily selected from peer-reviewed journals, much of which is recent, henceforth strengthening the validity of the findings. Furthermore, through focusing on teachers shared experienced within the socio-cultural framework instead of considering psychological and/or personal factors, this literature review could possibly contribute to greater implications for development of cross-cultural training and other means of support.

However, while exploring shared experiences may have allowed for more concrete findings, the simultaneous limitation in this literature review was that challenges were indeed discussed as separate of personal factors, such as personality traits or individual characteristics of teachers, and were instead based on teachers' described subjective experiences. While these are at times heavily implied through concepts such as flexibility, they are not further explored within the scope of this research. However, literature strongly suggests that personality and characteristics do in fact influence adjustment (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Hua et al., 2019; Peltokorpi, 2008; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012). According to Chu and Morrison (2011), teachers adjust to the host culture differently and at different rates, which is partially due to their personality characteristics. In their view "the ease with which a sojourner [the teacher] makes cross-cultural adjustments is a function of the inter-play of external factors, mediated by the personality and personal factors residing within each sojourner, and this interplay is different for each sojourner." (Chu & Morrison, 2011, p.485). The significance of personal factors not being explored within this research hence hinders the generalizability of it, as teachers are not neces-

sarily recognized as individuals. Peltokorpi and Froese (2012) additionally suggest that personality should be taken into account in recruitment in order to mitigate challenges caused by poor adjustment.

Hua et al. (2019) point out the need for the mediating effects of personality to be explored in relation to cross-cultural adjustment. In addition to their overall adjustment, in our case, these factors could, for example, influence how orientation, training or induction influences the adjustment of overseas teachers. Literature on overseas teachers' recruiters has given significance to several personality traits, such as emotional empathy and pedagogical flexibility (Budrow & Tarc, 2018). Motivation has also been found to positively influence cross-cultural adjustment (Guðmundsdóttir, 2015; Peltokorpi, 2008). As teachers vary from the typical expatriate, one might consider what their motivations are for relocation, and how these might influence adjustment. Research has found teachers to have a variety of reasons for relocation, including incentives to travel (Hrycak, 2015), financial opportunities (Aydin et al., 2019; Bailey, 2015a; Dunn, 2011) and professional development (Blackmore, 2014; Thompson, 2017). Exploring how teachers' motivations influence their cross-cultural adjustment would surely be an interesting task further illuminating the experience of overseas teachers.

Another significant concern within this literature review, is the question of to what extent the knowledge provided can be applicable to the development of cross-cultural training and/or support. While some research posits that making teachers aware of cultural differences is a sufficient way to facilitate adjustment (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Wu & Ang, 2011), this alone might remain superficial. If challenges, in this case "cultural differences", are quantified, teachers may fail to adapt a nuanced approach that respects the host culture and various other cultures at play, leaving much to stereotypes. As for what this approach might be, several terms appropriate to overseas teachers' relocation have been introduced to describe as going beyond mere knowledge of culture. One such term is cultural intelligence (CQ) which is described as an "individual's capability to adapt effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Huff et al., 2013, p.38). CQ takes into account factors such as motivation or behavior and has been linked to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment (Guðmundsdóttir, 2015; Huff et al., 2013). Various other terms, such as "intercultural competencies" (Lustig and Koester), "intercultural sensitivity" (Westrick) or "intercultural understanding" (Hill, 2006) have similarly been suggested (as cited in Hill, 2006, p.12). Hill (2006) argues that intercultural understanding "goes beyond, but includes, utilitarian objectives and cognitive knowledge; it also embraces the affective domain of empathy and respect, and being sufficiently open-minded to acknowledge the

existence and necessity of a range of perspectives” (p.12). This approach falls in line with previous considerations of flexibility and culturally responsive pedagogies, where it is not necessarily knowledge, but open-mindedness to challenge prior beliefs which can lead to successful adjustment. It must be recognized that this sort of intercultural learning does, however, not occur on its own, but it is a process which requires personal commitment from the teacher (Joslin, 2002). Henceforth, it is suggested that teachers’ personal and professional development, as opposed to knowledge of cultural differences, might be a more worthwhile concern for developing support for overseas teachers.

The majority of the cited research in this literature review is based on experiences of western Anglophone teachers, causing a significant limitation in the experiences described. It seems conceivable, that some challenges might arise from the privileged positioning of these teachers. It would be of value to research experiences of those with perhaps more marginalized experiences, or of different cultural backgrounds, in order to further understand the scope of experiences. For example, in the case of general adjustment, physical comfort is cited as a source of challenges. This challenge might be interpreted differently from those with varying backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, it seems in both the case of the bubble effect and divided staffrooms, the overseas teachers often positioned themselves as superior. Viewing challenges which arise from adjustment as inherently negative and as caused by the host culture may lead to teachers upholding negative stereotypes. Madrid et al. (2016) describe the experience as follows: “the teacher may have an idea about a cultural stereotype that exists based on knowledge alone, but after a cross-cultural teaching experience, she now has experience to support a stereotype” (p.348). If teachers do not “break free” of the bubble, they are less likely to gain a deeper understanding of the host culture, leaving their interpretations shallow. Similar to research by Madrid et al. (2016), the experiences of overseas teachers in staffrooms described within this literature review might have also further solidified overseas teachers’ belief in western ways of teaching.

However, while evidently an obstacle, western teachers might not necessarily consider it as such. This would perhaps further highlight the role of the supporting organization (often the school) to provide training and opportunities for western teachers to consider their notions of what they believe to be correct. Additionally, this would seemingly support the need for leaders to provide opportunities for teachers to critically discuss what it means to be a teacher with HCN staff. When considering the implications on their environments, Harrington (2007) questions if students are seeing adults whose behaviors and attitudes they should model and how

this might reinforce the gap between overseas teachers and HCNs. The findings of this literature review suggest that such a strong divide would be worth to be unpacked for all parties involved.

The statement echoed across this literature review, is best described by Sussman: “Individuals often do not acknowledge culture’s influence while interacting with citizens in their home countries; however, they usually become acutely aware of the home and host cultural differences when in a foreign country” (as cited in Hua et al., 2019, p.37). Challenges in all dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment are seemingly inevitable, and when faced by them, overseas teachers may describe vastly different experiences and approaches. However, it might very well be that this experience could serve as a valuable lesson for both personal and professional development, as was the case in teachers researched by Bailey (2015a), who ultimately felt re-skilled by their experience. In order for overseas teachers to seize the opportunities presented by cross-cultural adjustment, the interplay of various facets in challenges previously discussed must be further explored.

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