



## DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EDD)

### The influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in public schools in Abu Dhabi

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**The influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment  
and retention in public schools in Abu Dhabi**

Daisy Johnson

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of Bath

Department of Education

January 2021

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I am the author of this thesis, and the work described therein was carried out by myself personally.

Daisy Johnson

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## **ABSTRACT**

The recruitment and retention of teachers has been the subject of much debate and consternation over the last two decades given teacher shortages and high attrition rates seen in some contexts. While many factors have been attributed to this phenomenon, very little consideration has been given to the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in educational discourse.

Utilising the uses and gratifications theory as the main theoretical framework and a mixed methods approach, this study establishes the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Online surveys provided breadth and scope while focus group interviews offered the explanations that are necessary from a critical realist perspective.

Quantitative analysis of online survey data revealed the importance of social media in enabling expatriate teachers to maintain connections and relationships with family and friends in their home country confirming the views expressed in the reviewed literature of social needs as a major driver for using social media. Qualitative data analysis highlighted the overall importance of social media to expatriate teachers in finding information and sharing resources before moving to Abu Dhabi, and, during their time in the emirate. The active nature of expatriate teachers in their selection of which social media platforms to use and to which groups they participated in based on their needs at a given time was evident highlighting the goal-directed nature of social media use by expatriate teachers. The informational and emotional support offered to expatriate teachers on social media, while not experienced by all teachers, was valuable to those who received it, thus supporting their determination to remain employed in Abu Dhabi. While the support offered by family and friends differed to that offered by other expatriate teachers, the positive effect this had on retention was evident in this study.

This study contributes to the scant literature on the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention and draws attention to key considerations applicable to the Abu Dhabi context. Further research in this area can draw on some of the insights highlighted in this context and support policy makers and those tasked with staffing schools to harness the power of social media to meet the staffing requirements of schools both locally and on the global arena.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AD – Abu Dhabi

AE – Assigned expatriate

AVP – Academic Vice Principal

ECT – Early career teacher

ICT – Information and communications technology

IM – Instant messaging

MOE – Ministry of Education

OE – Organisationally assigned expatriate

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SIE – Self-initiated expatriate

SNS – Social network site

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States

U&G – Uses and gratifications theory

# CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The use of social media has increased significantly over the last decade. Explosion in the use of this technology has influenced different areas of people's lives including their political opinion, leisure activities, and not least educational pedagogy and practice. Social media use in education has been extensively encouraged and researched (Szeto, Cheng and Hong, 2016; Chawinga, 2017; Hussain, Cakir and Candeger, 2018; Gleason and von Gillern, 2018) in what is now considered a digital age. While much of the research has focused on students and how social media can improve engagement and achievement (e.g. Alshuaibi et al., 2018; Al-Yafi, El-Masri and Tsai, 2018), there appears to be a dearth of research on the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of teachers, particularly those teaching outside their home country in a strikingly different cultural, social and educational context. This thesis therefore aims to explore how expatriate teachers utilise social media, and more importantly, how social media influences their decision to seek teaching opportunities and remain employed in Abu Dhabi (AD). While much has been written about how employers use social media to vet and select potential employees (Berger and Zickar, 2016; Carr, 2016; Davison et al., 2016), there appears to be a paucity of research on how teachers use social media to find jobs and how it influences their intention to remain employed once they have secured a position.

Extant literature has focused on teacher recruitment and retention in national education systems (Cockburn, 2000; Mafora, 2013; Gomba, 2015; Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kokka, 2016; Faremi, 2017), and international schools (Joslin, 2002; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009; Chandler, 2010). However, there currently appears to be limited research on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers working in public education systems outside their home country. Research in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has focused on government efforts to reduce its dependence on expatriate teachers by recruiting and training more nationals (Gardner, 1995; Raven, 2010) and considered the motivations for choosing teaching as a career for expatriate teachers (Sharif, Upadhyay and Ahmed, 2016). This therefore leaves a gap in academic research on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in AD given reports from the media of attrition of both local and expatriate teachers (Edarabia, 2011), and increased competition for English-speaking teachers from other countries offering higher salaries (Clarke, 2017). Moreover, there appears to be a paucity of 'literature about factors influencing the decision of expatriates to teach in schools in the Gulf region' (Sharif, Upadhyay and Ahmed, 2016, p.210).

The recruitment and retention of teachers in an increasingly competitive and highly regulated educational environment presents a challenge for governments and education authorities striving to improve educational standards whilst under the scrutiny of the news media, local stakeholders as well as international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD, consisting of 36-member countries, aims to disseminate policies that help governments to advance the social and economic welfare of the global population (OECD, 2018). In this widely publicised and increasingly high-stakes environment, the influence of social media on those at the heart of delivering high quality education that meets these demands, namely teachers, is of significant interest.

Interest in the recruitment and retention of teachers by policy makers has increased considerably as those leading schools regularly face difficulties filling posts (Worth, De Lazzari and Hillary, 2017). Reports of high attrition rates in this challenging environment abound with particular emphasis placed on the number of new teachers that leave the profession within the first five years of qualifying (Ingersoll, 2003; Towers and Maguire, 2017; See et al., 2020). Indeed, teacher attrition is 'a perennial problem receiving



heightened attention due to its intensity, complexity, and spread' (Craig, 2017, p.859). While many factors have been attributed to this phenomenon, very little consideration has been given to the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in educational discourse. Moreover, the OECD (2005) highlights demands on schools and subsequently teachers, where:

Society now expects schools to deal effectively with different languages and student backgrounds, to be sensitive to culture and gender issues, to promote tolerance and social cohesion, to respond effectively to disadvantaged students and students with learning or behavioural problems, to use new technologies, and to keep pace with rapidly developing fields of knowledge and approaches to student assessment. (p.2)

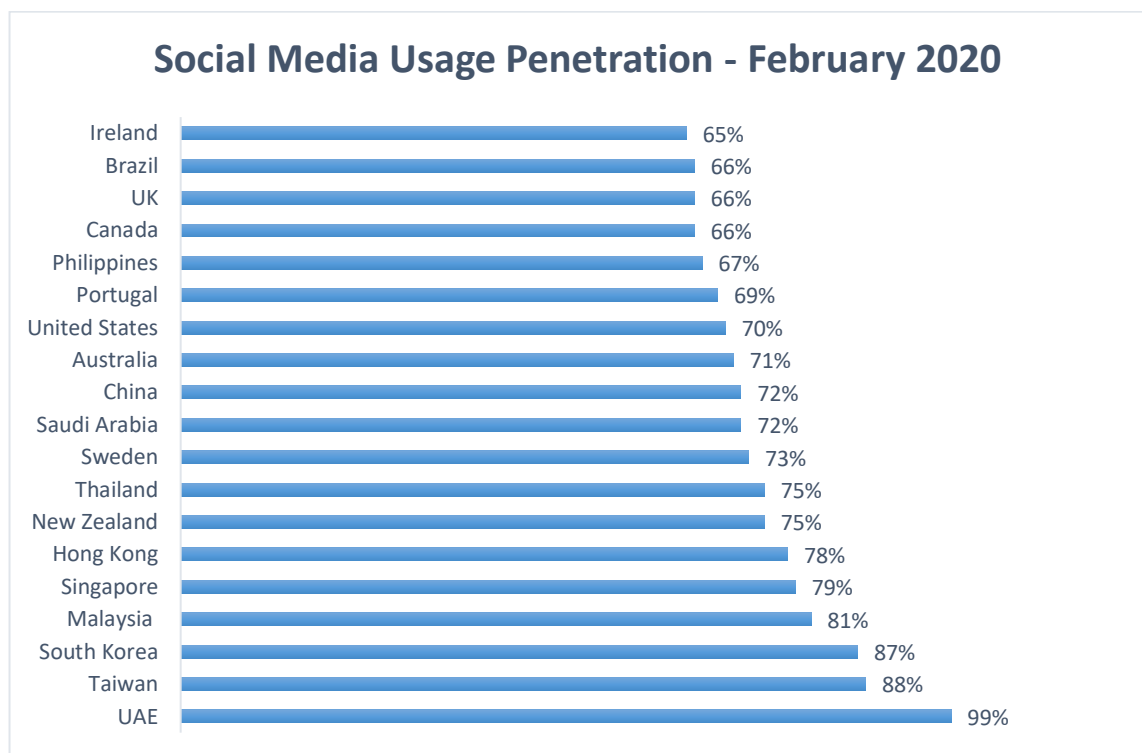
These expectations are challenging and even more compelling given the recruitment and retention issues faced in many countries (See et al., 2020) and the broader roles teachers are expected to fulfil both in and outside the classroom (OECD, 2005). Van Droogrenbroeck, Spruyt and Vanroelen (2014) attribute this to the intensification of the profession where teachers are under constant scrutiny from parents, school leaders and policy makers. In a paradoxical climate of increased expectations, low social status of the profession and negative commentaries about the education system by the media (Cockburn, 2000; OECD, 2005; Shine, 2015), and the wider public, the demands placed on schools and teachers are in sharp contrast to the prevailing educational climate where teaching salaries are decreasing in most countries (OECD, 2005). In fact, salaries are failing to rise at the same rate as inflation in countries such as England (Worth, De Lazzari and Hillary, 2017), further emphasising the challenges associated with the profession. In addition, the resources available to schools have not matched the growing demands placed on them (OECD, 2005).

Teaching outside the home country, possibly delivering different curricular where students' first language is not English poses a further challenge that some expatriate teachers may find difficult to overcome. What is more, the established professional support networks, familiar recruitment processes, clear career progression pathways and clearly identified professional development opportunities that expatriate teachers may be conversant with in their home country, are often not available in the host country thus compounding the already challenging situation that these teachers find themselves in. What remains a constant, despite these changes in personal and professional circumstances as well as geographical location, is the availability of social media and the facilities it affords those in these situations. What may differ is how and what social media is used for, and ultimately, the influence it has on expatriate teachers.

## **1.2 Motivations for conducting this study**

This study was motivated by several factors that are unique to the UAE. The specific focus on the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention comes from the researcher's observation of the prevalent use of social media across all areas of life in the UAE, not least with expatriate teachers. The UAE's drive to become a 'smarter and digitally transformed' country (CoDI, 2020, para.1) is evident in all areas including government departments, public services, health, education and leisure. This drive by the government has led to the extensive use of social media across all areas of public life. UAE leaders regularly share their vision for the nation with citizens through social media, engaging with the public, and driving the country's digital initiatives. Similarly, the Ministry of Education (MOE) engages in discussions, communicates and disseminates information to practitioners in the field through social media. This highlights the prevalent use of social media across all aspects of life in the UAE. Reflecting the pervasiveness of social media in this context, recent data from Statista (2020) highlights just how significant social media use is with the UAE being the only country with a social media penetration rate of more than 90%, reaching an incredible 99% (Statista, 2020). To highlight just how significant this

figure is, the UK has a social media penetration rate of 66% of the population, while North America has a social media penetration rate of 70% of the population using social media (Statista, 2020). Figure 1.1 illustrates the significance of social media usage in the UAE compared to other countries. With a population of 9.83 million and a reported 9.73 million active social media users, the annual growth in active social media users is 6.3% while the average daily time spent using social media is nearly one eighth of the day at 2 hours and 57 minutes (Global Media Insight, 2020). Although significant, this is not surprising given the large expatriate population in the UAE who would arguably use social media to maintain connections with friends and family in the home country, and the UAE government's drive to be an innovative world leader in digital services.



**Figure 1.1** Social media usage penetration in February 2020  
Source: Statista (2020)

The extensive use of social media is also evident in government schools where teachers regularly communicate with each other and with senior leaders in this environment. Additionally, information such as changes to the school day due to extreme weather conditions, professional development processes, and internal and external meeting schedules are communicated via social media. Examination schedules, celebrations of national events and curriculum innovations are also shared on social media by school leaders, subject advisors and education authorities. Aspects relating to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and other educational issues are discussed on social media in both teacher and school leadership groups. These groups engage in problem-solving, sharing of ideas, celebrating successes and identifying collaborative opportunities across schools. It is against this backdrop that the researcher opted to focus specifically on the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in AD given the significant size of this group relative to the overall teacher population in public schools in AD (**see Appendix A**), and the ongoing discussions surrounding the recruitment and retention of teachers globally (e.g. See et al., 2020). A more detailed discussion of the issues surrounding teacher recruitment and retention is conducted later in this chapter to further highlight the motivation for conducting this study.

This study was further motivated by the inimitable situation that expatriate teachers in AD find themselves in and the factors that influence their recruitment and retention. The

uniqueness of the UAE in terms of its adoption of social media is mirrored by the distinctiveness of the expatriate teacher population that work in this context. Expatriate teachers in AD come from national systems where they have been trained to deliver the local curriculum using pedagogical and assessment strategies relevant in those contexts. Whilst working in AD, they have to adapt to delivering a new curriculum and adjust their pedagogical repertoire to suit the local educational and cultural context. Moreover, their prior knowledge of professional development opportunities, accountability and appraisal mechanisms, and links to the local community have limited value once they start teaching in AD. Instead, expatriate teachers have to navigate a new educational landscape in a culturally different context fraught with unfamiliar experiences both professionally and personally. The role that social media plays in helping them navigate these new experiences to support their intention to seek employment given these challenges, and to remain employed once they are in AD was considered worthy of investigation.

Whether in the UAE or while in their home country, expatriate teachers use a range of resources to find out about employment opportunities in the UAE. Recruitment fairs are held both in the UAE and in other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Ireland and South Africa to attract expatriate teachers. Recruitment websites such as Teach Away, Teach Anywhere and Seek Teachers are also used extensively to recruit teachers, and in fact could be seen as the first point of information for those seeking employment outside their home country. It could be argued that for those looking for opportunities in the UAE, detailed information is invaluable in determining whether a move to another part of the world meets their personal requirements, particularly for those uprooting children from their schools, and spouses from their places of work. An understanding of the influence of social media in filling the gaps that recruitment websites are not able to satisfy and encourage what some would view as a risky move will be noteworthy in this study.

Successful candidates, once recruited, sign a 2 or 3 year contract and are deployed to public schools in any one of the three AD regions, namely: AD main island, Al Ain or Al Dhafra. Teachers are allocated to public schools on a full-time basis based on their specialist subject qualification and student age experience. Again, unlike the national systems of countries such as England where teachers can work part-time, there is limited flexibility in employment terms for public school expatriate teachers as they can only be employed on a full-time basis. For those who travel with, or have started a family in the UAE, this can pose a challenge as they are unable to tap into established support networks in the home country for matters pertaining to child-rearing. The influence of social media in helping expatriate teachers navigate this new environment to support their determination to remain employed in public schools is therefore worthy of consideration.

Another factor that motivated this study was an appreciation of the narrow career prospects for expatriate teachers in public schools where promotion is usually limited to one promotion, namely from teacher to Head of Faculty or from Head of Faculty to Academic Vice Principal (AVP). Therefore, unlike national systems of countries such as South Africa, the UK and the US, and unlike the potential promotion prospects for local Emirati teachers, expatriate teachers are unlikely to move up the career ladder from teacher to principal. It could be argued therefore that a move to the AD public education system is more suitable for those not seeking progression to higher positions in education in the short term, but rather seeking other experiences unrelated to career progression or advancement. Examination of the reasons for seeking employment in AD was considered noteworthy given this situation and whether social media enabled expatriate teachers to fulfil their professional goals while working in AD.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

Against the above backdrop, this research aims to establish the role that social media is playing in the current climate of high teacher attrition (See et al., 2020), increased workload, and greater accountability from external bodies (Van Droogrenbroeck, Spruyt and Vanroelen, 2014). With the movement of teachers to countries such as the UAE that value the qualifications and experiences of those trained in more established educational systems, coupled with the ease of access to social media from anywhere in the world, the question therefore arises of how expatriate teachers are using social media to secure employment outside their home country.

This study aims to answer the following broad questions:

1. How does social media influence expatriate teachers' decision to seek employment in AD?
2. What is the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment in AD?
3. What influence does social media have on expatriate teachers' intention to remain employed in AD schools?

### **1.4 The context**

The AD context is unique in that the majority of the population is not Emirati and despite the differences in cultural and religious influence, people from many parts of the world are willing to live and work here for varying lengths of time. This is not surprising given InterNations' (2020) best expat city ranking of AD as 10<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 66 cities in 2020. In fact, recent statistics indicate just how popular the emirate is with 2,356,638 expatriates residing in AD compared to 551,535 Emirati citizens, equating to 19 percent of the total emirate population (SCAD, 2017). Data for the academic year 2015-2016 in the UAE (MOE, 2015) for public schools in AD (see **APPENDIX A**) reflects the diversity in both the teaching workforce and the student population.

#### *1.4.1 Public education*

The UAE consists of seven emirates, namely AD which is the capital, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman and Fujairah (Gaad, Arif and Scott, 2006), which offer education, either privately, or publicly through government schools. Government funded schools, also known as 'public sector schools' (Gaad, Arif and Scott, 2006, p.293), follow the MOE curriculum. There have been major reforms in government schools in the UAE in the last six or seven years (Dickson et al., 2014), which have not abated in recent times.

Expatriate teachers in public schools hail from countries such as the UK, the US, South Africa, India, Canada and Ireland. They are employed to teach English Medium subjects which include mathematics and science, and the English language itself. While they may be specialists with experience of delivering subject-specific content using a range of instructional strategies, for many, teaching students whose first language is not English is a new experience compounded with the additional challenge of making the content accessible and culturally relevant. Concurring with this, He, Lundgren and Pynes (2017) make a critical point:

It is very rare for content area teachers to have the opportunity to teach content in a K-12 classroom setting where the instructional language is a foreign language for the local students. (p.148)

Working alongside Emirati and Arabic-speaking colleagues poses further challenges given the difficulty of having 'teachers of different nationalities and cultures in the same school' (Dickson et al., 2014, p.6). This further underscores the unique environment that expatriate teachers work in.

The AD education authority is referred to as a 'position-based public service' (OECD, 2011) as the best teachers are chosen for the available positions through external recruitment with the selection managed by the education authority. It is not a 'career-based system' in which according to the OECD (2011), there are strict entry requirements and teachers start working when they are young and are duly promoted according to a grade system. This study will focus specifically on external as opposed to internal recruitment as expatriate teachers are hired either from outside the UAE, or within the country but from other organisations. According to Breugh (2008), internal recruitment involves the nomination of current employees for new openings or existing workers applying for positions within their organisation while external recruitment involves employers advertising a position to external candidates who may or may not accept a position once it is offered.

#### *1.4.2 Language and culture*

For expatriate teachers coming to work as educators in AD public schools, the consideration of language and culture is as critical as the place of employment, the curricula that one will teach and the remuneration package that is offered. For many, the way of life in AD is in contrast to that in their home country. For those travelling with spouses who may not be working or are unable to secure employment, as well as children who will be attending new schools, the change in lifestyle and its effects is worth highlighting. Williams (1998, p.19-20) refers to 'culture shock', a term often used to describe the experience of those moving to a new country, adding that signs of this may include 'simple homesickness to headaches and depression, as well as more serious matters such as nervous disorders and breakdowns.' More worryingly, he contends that 'culture shock can be prime cause of family disputes, divorce and, not surprisingly, eventual repatriation.' (Williams, 1998, p.20) According to Joslin (2002, p.49) the term 'culture shock', which she acknowledges was first referred to by Oberg in 1960, 'explains both the symptoms and the process of adapting to a different culture'. She acknowledges that in order to think in a way 'that is culturally and socially effective in a particular context', expatriate teachers may initially need to deal with the stress of the transition to a new environment before reaching a position where they experience contentment with their personal situation (Joslin, 2002, p.50). Furthermore, Joslin (2002, p.51) advocates 'individuals to maintain their respective core cultural identities, while at the same time, sharing understanding of the cultural heritage of others.' This suggests that expatriate teachers should expect to find the move to the UAE initially unsettling and quite possibly fraught with unfamiliar situations due to cultural and social differences both in and outside the school environment. It is therefore worth exploring the role of social media in helping expatriate teachers develop an understanding of the cultural heritage of the various stakeholders in the school system, including, but not limited to administrators, students, parents and local as well as expatriate Arab teachers, as this understanding may be key to their successful adaptation and hence retention. A key question during this research will be how social media helps expatriate teachers prepare for employment in AD, and once expatriated, how they use social media, intentionally or unintentionally, to minimise some of the ill-effects of living and working abroad.

While the official national language of the UAE is Arabic (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Woods, 2009), English is widely used for communication. The importance of Arabic as the preferred language for many Emiratis and Arab expatriates from countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, to name but a few, is worth pointing out. Communication with mostly Arabic-speaking parents, is often facilitated by an Arabic-speaking third party, for example a school social worker, which anecdotally is seen by many expatriate teachers as limiting in its impact on their students. The fact that 'relations with parents' is one of the five main reasons newly qualified teachers leave the profession (Struyven and Vanthournout, 2014, p.43), highlights the challenges that expatriate teachers in public schools may experience due to their limited ability to communicate directly with parents.

### *1.4.3 About the researcher*

At this point, it is worth providing some background information about myself to further explain my motivations for conducting this study. Although I have lived and worked in the UAE since August 2010, most of my teaching experience was in England, specifically in London and Hertfordshire. Having taught information and communications technology (ICT) in secondary schools for nearly 10 years, and been a senior leader for half that time, I have a keen appreciation of how technology can be harnessed to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes. Additionally, I am acutely aware of the differences in teachers' perceptions of the value of ICT and their willingness or reluctance to engage with it having worked in schools in the UK when the government at the time embarked on an ambitious target to raise the ICT levels of all teachers in both primary and secondary schools. The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) aimed to support teachers to ensure that they felt comfortable with ICT, and thus used it competently while delivering their curriculum (Kirkwood et al., 2000). The slow uptake of this training initiative in Scotland (Kirkwood et al., 2000) for example, highlighted that engagement with ICT and its related platforms was not uniform across all schools and teaching staff. This experience demonstrated to me that the use of ICT by teachers for professional or personal use varies according to teachers' sociodemographic characteristics, willingness to engage with technology, and the perceived benefits they expect to derive from its use.

Once in the UAE, I worked in public schools in AD initially as an advisor supporting ICT and Arabic language teachers in implementing the curriculum, and then in Al Ain as a training specialist supporting school leaders and teachers to raise standards and improve educational outcomes for students. This experience furnished me with a detailed understanding of the AD context and provided first-hand knowledge and understanding of the opportunities, rewards and challenges of working as an expatriate in the public education system in AD. While in these roles, my use of social media was limited to brief communications with colleagues and school staff about meeting dates and times. Communication and the sharing of work-related material with colleagues and school staff was mainly conducted through e-mail as this was the communication channel I had been conversant with while working in schools in the UK.

While I use social media both professionally and socially, I would not consider my use extensive, nor do I regularly create content or contribute to discussions on social media. I use social media platforms mainly to maintain connections with friends and family, and occasionally to establish connections on professional network sites. Much to the surprise of family and friends, and sometimes their chagrin, I do not have a Facebook account nor do I use other social media platforms that require the uploading of content in the form of videos, blogs and photos. The sharing of photos or videos is done privately with interested parties that are known to me through instant messaging (IM). While I acknowledge that my limited use of social media prevents me from fully benefitting from the features it affords, I have actively made this decision due to my preference for privacy and my unwillingness to unintentionally provide personal data to the organisations that run these social media platforms. Despite my personal stance, this study was spurred by my experience in AD public schools where I keenly recognised the value that expatriate teachers placed on social media from both a professional and personal level, and how this influenced their experiences both while seeking employment in AD, and while living and working in this context.

### *1.4.4 Positionality*

Given that 'the role the author/researcher plays in a project requires some form of acknowledgement of awareness of that position' (Clift, Hatchard and Gore, 2018, p.ix), it is necessary at this stage to clarify both my position in an AD school and my position on the topic, in other words, positionality. While positionality can change during the research process, where I stand in relation to the participants and the topic of research (Merriam et

al., 2001), demonstrating and heeding awareness of my position (Clift, Hatchard and Gore, 2018), is critical to ensuring that the research process is transparent and trustworthy. Taking guidance from Chavez (2008, p.474), my 'sense of self, and the situated knowledge' I possess as a result of my location in the study is worth highlighting at this stage.

During the time the research was conducted, I was an AVP at a public school in AD. In this role I line-managed all teaching staff and was therefore responsible for their professional development and performance appraisals. While some of the participants in this study were employed in the school I worked in, the majority were either current or former teachers in AD public schools. Given that total insiders 'share multiple identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class) or profound experiences (e.g., wars, family membership)' with participants, while partial insiders share a single or a few identities 'with a degree of distance or detachment' from participants (Chavez, 2008, p.475), I therefore considered myself a partial insider. This was due to my knowledge of the experiences of expatriate teachers and sharing some characteristics with the research participants, while also recognising differences in professional position and contractual obligations, and thus experiences in the education system. It is worth clarifying that 'Insider positionality refers to aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned with participants' (Chavez, 2008, p.475). This contrasts with outsider research which is 'research that is undertaken by those who do not have a priori knowledge of the community under study, nor its members.' (Greene, 2014, p.2) While acknowledging that as a partial insider, I was familiar with the context of the research (Greene, 2014), and was acquainted with the expatriate teacher population and their experiences, I was mindful of how my role as an AVP may have made teachers in my school feel obliged to participate due to my seniority while quite possibly censoring their responses during data collection. Further details of how this was mitigated are provided in the ethical considerations section in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Despite the claim that not 'all teachers engage with or have a positive attitude towards social media' (Owen et al., 2015; cited by Fox and Bird, 2017, p.651), this study assumes the premise that social media has a positive influence on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention given the unique context that they find themselves in. As social media enables teachers to engage in online interactivity on a personal and/or professional level to grow their 'network of friends and connections' or to facilitate their 'professional learning' (Fox and Bird, 2017, p.648), its benefit to expatriate teachers in AD is worthy of consideration. Indeed, Fox and Bird (2017, p.664) found in their study that social media influenced decisions to enter the profession and provided valuable support on first entering teaching with one participant stating 'The first year of teaching is really tough and I think I would've really struggled without social media'. Furthermore, social media enabled teachers to connect to those outside their school for resources, ideas and inspiration which minimised isolation and facilitated the development of 'a sense of belonging to the wider profession' (Fox and Bird, 2017, p.664). For expatriate teachers, the inspiration to seek employment and move to AD may come from posts read on social media. Once employed, the establishment of connections to others in the same position as well as access to information for both personal and professional use, may positively influence retention. Indeed, Le Cornu (2013) highlights from her research the value associated with positive relationships and support from colleagues, family and friends to early career teachers (ECTs) which supported their determination to remain in teaching. Due to its features and functions, social media is a tool that affords expatriate teachers the facility to establish and maintain these relationships and tap into the valuable support that may be offered in this environment. Thus, this study aims to shed light on how influential social media is on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention given the above-mentioned position of the researcher.

## 1.5 Rationale

Research into the use of social media in education has focused primarily on its influence on students' learning, achievement and motivation (Sheldon, 2015). While it is comprehensible that the focus of the influence of social media has been on student learning, progress and motivation, a gap in the research, that is, the influence of social media on teacher recruitment and retention, warrants closer examination. It is therefore worth considering the current state of teacher recruitment and retention to appreciate the significance of this study.

### 1.5.1 Teacher demand

The increasing demand for teachers has been the subject of discussion over the last two decades with several factors being attributed to this issue, and a range of solutions offered to meet this need. A shortage of teachers occurs when the supply of teachers does not sufficiently meet demand in the labour market which can be as a consequence of greater demand for teachers or a reduction in supply, or a combination of these factors at the same time (Guarino, Santibanez and Daley, 2006). The demand for teachers is defined 'as the number of teaching positions offered at a given level of overall compensation, and the *supply of teachers* as the number of qualified individuals willing to teach at a given level of overall compensation' (Guarino, Santibanez and Daley, 2006, p.174). Overall compensation includes salaries, benefits, and rewards associated with conditions of work and satisfaction on a personal level (Guarino, Santibanez and Daley, 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa, the requirement for new recruits is high in Ghana, Malawi and Lesotho, although this is ascribed to different contextual factors (Lewin, 2002). While this pattern is not uniform across sub-Saharan Africa, with for example, South Africa facing severe shortages while neighbouring Botswana has a sufficient supply of teachers (Irving, 2012), the general trend appears to suggest increased demand for teachers in this part of the world. Indeed, Cobbold (2015) highlights that despite repeated attempts by the government to alleviate teacher shortages in Ghana through hiring and training additional teachers, the shortage remains unresolved. Teacher shortage does not necessarily mean there are inadequate 'numbers of qualified teachers generally' but rather may relate to specific regions, subjects or levels in the education system (Cobbold, 2015, p.73). After sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab states have the second largest demand for teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013) further highlighting the need to examine the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in the UAE.

### 1.5.2 Teacher turnover

While some have argued that the shortage of teachers has been a consequence of a large proportion of teachers retiring, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) have attributed it to the high attrition rates seen in the profession, particularly with those new to teaching. Teacher attrition refers to teachers who leave the profession while teacher migration refers to those who leave one school to join another (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004; Ingersoll and May, 2012; Lindqvist, Nordanger and Carlsson, 2014; Ryan et al., 2017). Although attrition and migration both disrupt student learning, on a national level however, migration does not change overall teacher numbers while attrition does. While the departure of some members of staff may be beneficial to any organisation as this may result in low performing staff leaving (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004; Ingersoll and Collins, 2017), the worrying rates of turnover seen in teaching are detrimental to schools and the achievement of students due to the high levels of collaboration required in schools. Employee turnover is defined as 'an organisation's inability to retain their employees' (Dhanpat et al., 2018, p.2). Teacher turnover includes both teacher migration and teacher attrition and is significant as it has a bearing on organisations and their ability to function effectively (Ingersoll and May, 2012). The financial implications for schools when teachers leave, which include the costs of hiring and training new teachers while losing the initial investments made on those who have left (Ryan et al., 2017), is worth highlighting. Indeed, with 'teacher turnover rates ranging from 11-30 percent' in the UAE (KHDA, 2016; cited by Warner, 2018, p.7), the annual costs to



schools of replacing these teachers can be crippling to both school finances and more importantly, student achievement.

Given the extensive focus on the shortage of teachers (e.g. Martin and Mulvihill, 2016; Newberry and Allsop, 2017; Towers and Maguire, 2017), and high attrition rates, particularly for those new to the profession, factors that influence this are worthy of investigation. High attrition rates in schools have been of interest for some time with worrying statistics documented by researchers in different contexts. Newberry and Allsop (2017) highlight the challenges of employing and retaining teachers in the US. For example, in his analysis of data in the US from the Schools and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Followup Survey, Ingersoll (2003, p.148) found that 'between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave teaching altogether' which, arguably, has significant implications on school stability and organisational budgets. Although attrition rates in England were marginally better, data from the School Workforce in England report in November 2016 indicated that 31 percent of teachers had left the profession after 5 years while 40 percent had left after 10 years (DfE, 2016). Similar to the US, a recent study of attrition rates for new teachers in French-speaking Belgium found that over five years, there were higher attrition rates in secondary education than in basic education with a staggering 44.9 percent of teachers in the years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 leaving the profession compared to 24.7 percent leaving in basic education (Dupriez, Delvaux and Lothaire, 2016). In this study, the highest attrition rates for both basic and secondary education were seen in the first year of teaching with significant decreases in the second year and a more gradual decline in attrition rates in the subsequent three years suggesting that once new entrants gained some experience, their confidence and resilience increased, or quite possibly, their ability to tap into different support networks improved. It could be argued that such high rates of attrition not only directly affect students within schools but also the teachers who remain in the profession as their workload invariably increases due to requirements to cover classes or to increase existing class sizes. This begs the question therefore of how social media, which enables teachers to share their experiences of teaching, whether positive or negative, influences the recruitment and retention of teachers.

### *1.5.3 Teacher agency*

Contrary to the constant rhetoric of teachers leaving the profession due to difficult working conditions, the desire to 'exercise agency as teachers', becoming 'agents of their own future' (Smith and Ulvik, 2017, p.13) has also resulted in teachers leaving the profession. The participants interviewed by Smith and Ulvik (2017) had not left teaching due to dissatisfaction with the job as they found pleasure in teaching, but rather because of their personalities and the need to explore different opportunities outside the profession. While their study was limited to four participants thus restricting its representation of the motivations for leaving teaching, and as Smith and Ulvik (2017, p.15) point out, 'generalisations of the findings', it does highlight that attrition rates cannot be solely attributed to dissatisfaction with teaching conditions and the profession. Consequently, in this research, it will be interesting to examine whether this desire to do other things, visit new places and experience different contexts was a driving force for teachers coming the UAE without necessarily making the drastic move to leave the profession, but rather, work in a different context while still remaining in the safe confines of their profession. Interestingly, Hoigaard, Giske and Sundsli (2012, p.348) speculate that teachers have greater freedom of movement and opportunities to secure other jobs which may be attributed to lower levels of commitment to their 'original educational choice'. For those not willing to completely leave the profession, this freedom of movement together with the advantage of using existing qualifications in a foreign country may be enough to generate interest in new opportunities in a different educational context. If this is the case, the role of social media in influencing expatriate teachers' decisions to seek and secure employment in AD is worthy of examination.

## **1.6 Existing research**

Existing research in this area by Mercieca and Kelly (2018) explores the use of social media by teachers new to the profession either employed in schools on a temporary or fixed-length basis in Australia. While some of Mercieca and Kelly's (2018) findings, which will be returned to later in this thesis, may resonate with this study, there are significant differences in the research focus. Firstly, this research examines the use of social media by expatriate teachers who themselves, come from a diverse range of education systems. Secondly, the study will focus on their experiences of using social media for recruitment from their home country, and while living and working in AD, a culturally different context to that which they may be familiar with. Thirdly, many of the participants are away from their families and support systems which adds a further strain to their teaching experience. Furthermore, expatriate teachers in AD have to familiarise themselves with the appraisal systems, career progression and professional development opportunities available in the AD education system. Finally, the experience that these teachers gain may not be considered valuable on return to their home country thus invalidating any pay increments that they may have been entitled to had they increased their length of service in their home country. Indeed, Begley, Collings and Scullion (2008) found in their research on repatriation that international experience was not always appreciated or acknowledged in the home country, with some participants being offered lower positions than their previous role in the host country. A combination of all these factors underlines the marked difference in contexts, experiences and challenges for expatriate teachers in AD compared to locally trained Australian teachers in familiar educational and social contexts delivering curricula they have been trained to teach. The above differences, coupled with the challenges associated with moving to a new context as highlighted by Armitage and Powell (1997) which include culture shock, mismatch between expectations and realities in the host country, and inability to adapt to the new environment, points to the differences between this and the study conducted by Mercieca and Kelly (2018).

## **1.7 What is social media?**

The term social media is broadly used to describe online technologies that enable people to share opinions, images, videos and audio files. Social media includes 'wikis, blogs, social bookmarking, and social networking sites' (Weidner et al., 2016, p.80). A more in-depth review of extant literature on social media will be conducted in Chapter 2. Usage of social media in its various forms has grown exponentially in the last decade with Statista (2018) predicting that by 2021, 3.02 billion users will regularly use social media which is significant as this figure represents one third of the world population. Social media enables users to connect online, and discuss areas of similar interest thus creating a social network community for those involved in the discussions (Schuschke and Tynes, 2016). The reasons for, and the extent to which users engage in these online communities is based on a variety of needs and motives, together with the functionality offered by social media. These needs and motives will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

## **1.8 Theoretical framework**

Several studies have been conducted to understand why people use social media and the benefits they associate with its use. While there are positive benefits connected with using social media (Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016), the reviewed literature also points to the negative effects related to its use (e.g. Rosen et al., 2013; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016; Woods and Scott, 2016). Despite these differences, the use of social media has not waned and is not likely to do so given the motivations for its use, and indeed, the perceived benefits by those using social media. The view that social media is now considered 'an integral part of everyday life' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p.2) helping people 'fulfill goals and solve problems both practical and social' (Humphreys, 2016, p.109) has permeated society resulting in the explosion of its use and the unlikelihood that its popularity will wane. Moreover, social media has been viewed as empowering in enabling networked users to access information (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013).

### *1.8.1 Interpersonal communication theories*

Traditional interpersonal communication theories such as uncertainty reduction theory, expectancy violation theory and social exchange theory have been used to understand social media use and behaviours. (Sheldon, 2015). While valuable in predicting and explaining how relationships develop between people who do not know each other on social media, uncertainty reduction theory (Sheldon, 2015) offers little insight into how expatriate teachers, who arguably may communicate with strangers on social media, use social media during their recruitment and to support their retention. It does however illuminate the strategies that users of social media may employ 'to gain information about a person who they have recently met online' (Autheunis, Valkenburg and Peter, 2010, p.100) which may prove useful to newly recruited expatriate teachers seeking new connections while in the home country or in AD. With its focus on the explaining online relationships (Sheldon, 2015), and violation of expectations being either positive or negative in this environment (McLaughlin and Vitak, 2012), expectations violation theory offers insight into how expatriate teachers may develop norms for communicating on social media. However, it fails to offer an appropriate theoretical framework to examine how social media influences the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Instead, it has proved a useful theory when exploring how users conduct themselves on social media, the effects of violations on relationship goals, and the resulting actions social media users take when negative violations are experienced (e.g. McLaughlin and Vitak, 2012). This theory could help explain how expatriate teachers may react if expectations are violated while they try to find out information that supports their recruitment or retention, or when establishing relationships with other expatriate teachers in AD.

More applicable to this study is the social exchange theory. This theory posits that 'interpersonal interaction is a process' in which individuals 'conduct activities and exchange valuable resources' (Jinyang, 2015, p.172). In this theory, 'human interaction is like an economic transaction - one may seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs' (Yang and Horak, 2019, p.401). The essence of the social exchange theory is reciprocity where rewards for exchanging resources include material and psychological rewards such as support, prestige, trust, and self-esteem (Jinyang, 2015). Moreover, relationships, according to this theory, are interdependent with the action of one member affecting both the relationship and the other member involved in the exchange (Sheldon, 2015). The extent to which individuals remain in these relationships is based on the evaluation of the costs which have a negative value, and the rewards which have a positive value (Sheldon, 2015). In addition, Sheldon (2015, p.9) states that in this theory, 'the worth of a relationship predicts its outcome', with rewards in positive relationships exceeding costs and the opposite being true in negative relationships. She adds that the standards people use to judge costs and rewards change as time progresses, and from one individual to another. The central tenant of the social exchange theory is that:

Social exchange comprises actions contingent on the rewarding reactions of others, which over time provide for mutually and rewarding transactions and relationships. (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p.890)

While 'several studies have applied the social exchange theory to the phenomenon of social networking' (Sheldon, 2015), and the resultant relationships, this study focuses on how social media influences the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. The relationships that are developed and maintained by expatriate teachers while using social media are just one facet of how they use social media while seeking employment and while living and working in AD. Therefore, while the social exchange theory may provide some useful insights into the costs and rewards in the relationships that expatriate teachers develop while using social media, and how these relationships influence their recruitment and retention, these relationships and their associated costs and rewards are not the sole focus of this study.

### 1.8.2 Mass communication theories

Mass communication theories exploring why people use traditional mass media such as television, magazines, newspapers and radio (Sheldon, 2015) have long been researched with more recent studies focusing on the motivations for, and satisfactions derived from the use of social media. According to Sundar and Limperos (2013):

Media today range from a plethora of devices (smart phones, robots) to channels (social networking sites, home shopping network) and/or devices (smartphone apps), affording users the ability to not only interact with these "media" (human-computer interaction) but also interact through them to communicate with other users (computer-mediated communication). (p.505)

This highlights the broad range of media available today and crucially, the interactive nature of this new media. In the agenda-setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), 'what is covered in the news becomes what people say is important to them' (Sheldon, 2015, p.25) However, 'media are not always successful at telling us what to think' but has more success 'telling us what to think about' (Sheldon, 2015, p.24-25). This theory may provide some guidance into issues raised on social media that expatriate teachers should think about while seeking employment in AD, and once employed, matters pertaining to their retention. However, it may not illuminate how social media influences the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Another theory that has been related to social media is cultivation theory (Williams, 2006; cited by Wei, McIntyre and Straub, 2020). According to Stein, Krause and Ohler (2019), cultivation theory:

'assumes that the repeated and extensive use of mass media will entice audiences to absorb the broadcast information into their worldview, successfully homogenizing viewers into a singular mainstream'. (p.2)

However, as stated by Wei, McIntyre and Straub (2020, p.505), research that applies the cultivation theory to examine how social media exposure affects 'consumer attitude and behavior' is scant. Similarly, Sheldon (2015, p.30) indicates that this theory has not garnered the attention of social media researchers although she does highlight that 'several studies have found that what other people post online might cultivate the perceptions' of other users who read this content. Thus, while applying the cultivation theory to this study may usefully highlight how reading other expatriate teachers' posts on social media might influence the perceptions of those seeking employment in AD or teachers already working in this context, this theory will not provide the detail to explain the needs of expatriate teachers and how social media facilitates these needs in relation to recruitment and retention.

Therefore, while mass communication theories such as agenda-setting theory and cultivation theory have been used to understand how users engage with social media or are influenced by social media, the uses and gratification approach (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1973) has gained prominence due, according to Sheldon (2015), its primary assumption that users of media are active and will therefore use social media to meet their needs. Indeed, Dolan et al.'s (2016, p.261) assertion that social media has changed users 'from passive observers to active participants' due to its interactive features further stresses the significance of uses and gratifications (U&G) in examining the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention. With similar goals, recent studies have adopted U&G as the theoretical framework to examine users' needs, motives and accompanying satisfactions in the usage of various social media platforms (e.g. Wang, Tchernev and Solloway, 2012; Karimi et al., 2014; Chiu and Huang, 2015; Musa, Azmi and Ismail, 2015; Al Jabri et al., 2015; Dolan et al., 2016; Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Gan, 2018; Bae, 2018;) thus underscoring its relevance and appropriateness for this research. Moreover,

Sheldon (2015) contends that U&G has been used the most in relation to social media given that users will use social media to meet their individual needs. A more detailed review of the relevance and appropriateness of U&G in this study will be undertaken in the next chapter.

### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter has described the context in which expatriate teachers in AD live and work. Attention has been drawn to the high attrition rates faced in education systems around the world, particularly for those new to the profession, as well as the reasons for what Ingersoll (2012, p.49) refers to as the 'revolving door' in education where a sizeable number of teachers leave the profession long before they are due to retire. Further, consideration has been given to theories relating to interpersonal communication and mass media and the relevance of these theories to this study. It is against this backdrop that this research aims to investigate the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers.

## CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter initially describes the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1. The views of proponents and opponents of U&G will be appraised. The terms expatriate, social media and social media literacy are defined together with a review of extant literature on social media, teacher recruitment and retention. Additionally, types of social media are briefly explored together with differences in degree of user engagement with social media. The current use of social media in recruitment and retention is also considered along with the role of social media as a mechanism for support.

It is worth clarifying, at this juncture, terms that are frequently used in this study with reference to social media. Humphreys (2016, p.18) citing Rochet and Tirole (2003) defines a platform as a system that manages the ‘interaction between two or more groups of people’. Technology is defined as ‘a material configuration that allows for the production or reception of media’ while form ‘is the type of media that results from a particular technology’, and genre ‘is a particular set of conventions within a form’. (Humphreys, 2016, p.31).

### 2.2 Uses and gratifications theory

The contention that those researching media should study human needs to determine the influence of the media on the creation and satisfaction of these needs (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1973) is critical to this study given Sheldon’s (2015, p.22) assertion ‘that the patterns and motives behind social media usage are, in part, a function of demographic and personality variables.’ For all intents and purposes, U&G has provided some clarity on why people use social media. According to Smock et al. (2011):

Uses and gratifications (U&G) is a theoretical framework that is used to study how media, including social media, are utilized to fulfil the needs of individual users with different goals. (p.2322)

Simply put, U&G aids in the development of an understanding of ‘how and why people seek out specific media’ (Krause, North and Heritage, 2014, p.71). The key focus of this approach according to Al-Jabri, Sadiq Sohail and Ndubisi (2015):

is to explain the reasons why individuals chose a specific medium over alternative communication media in order to gain an understanding of social and psychological needs, and to explicate users’ motives when engaging with computer-mediated communications (CMC) media including social media. (p.665)

The needs and motives of a user are therefore central to U&G. Whilst acknowledging that there is often a lack of clear demarcation between needs and motives, Kink and Hess (2008, p.28) emphasise that a need precedes a motive with the former indicating a ‘general feeling of scarcity e.g., appetite’ while the latter refers to a ‘feeling of scarcity targeted at a certain state, e.g., eating pizza’. Crucially, users actively choose media that they feel will meet their needs (Kink and Hess, 2008; Gan, 2018). Thus, a need could be the desire to find something out while motive would be using social media to explore other people’s views, opinions or experiences of the query at hand. In this example, the user actively chooses media that they expect will meet their needs. Different media vie for users’ attention (Kink and Hess, 2008), suggesting therefore that users are actively selecting the media they feel is most likely to solve their problem or satisfy their needs. This highlights that users are not passively using media, with little thought about their needs, but rather, constantly making judgments about which media will satisfy their requirements.

While most of the reviewed literature refers in general to gratifications, a clear distinction between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained is worth highlighting. According to Kink and Hess (2008), citing Palmgreen, Wenner and Rayburn (1980), motives are the gratifications sought, while the satisfied needs are the gratifications obtained. This is a useful distinction as it highlights that there may be differences in the extent to which gratifications sought are obtained. Moreover, it indicates the differences in outcome for different users who may be using the same media platform. Further to this, Alhabash and Ma's (2017, p.4) conjecture 'that affordances and functionality of each platform yield a unique set of motivations and gratifications sought and obtained' draws attention to the complexity of social media uses and gratifications given the constant development in design and functionality which they indicate will influence motivations and the way social media is used. Indeed, different social media platforms yield different gratifications with corresponding features resulting in the same gratifications (Gan, 2018). Moreover, the difference in degree of gratification for each platform (Gan, 2018) further underlines the complexity of measuring the extent to which gratifications sought are obtained. Given 'that gratifications obtained are a better predictor of media use than gratifications sought' (Karimi et al., 2014, p.55), it could be argued that these gratifications will differ from one user to another based on their needs and motives, and from one social media platform to another based on its features and functionality.

### *2.2.1 Criticisms of U&G*

While U&G has been widely used to understand how people use media and the satisfaction derived from its use, there have been criticisms levied at what is regarded as the vagueness and imprecision in defining related concepts including 'use', 'gratifications', 'motive' and 'need' (Weiss, 1976; Swanson, 1979; Alhabash and Ma, 2017). This lack of clarity in defining key concepts related to U&G has been attributed to researchers of this theory attaching 'different meanings to concepts such as motives, uses, gratifications' which has contributed to unclear thought processes and reviews (Ruggiero, 2000, p.12). According to Swanson (1979), this shortcoming generates misunderstanding resulting in research using these concepts endorsing the researcher's own views. He argues that it is difficult to examine whether the consumption of media satisfies the user's needs if we are unable to stipulate:

(a) what a gratification is; (b) what the relation is between a gratification and a use; (c) whether a use is a motive, the result of a need, the statement of a function, or all three of these, or none of these; (d) what the relation is between a use and its necessary antecedent state-need, problem, motive, or whatever-if, indeed, a use has a necessary antecedent state; and (e) what exactly would count as a negative case which could not be explained *ex post facto* by these ill-defined concepts? (Swanson, 1979, p.40)

These are perfectly valid questions that the reviewed literature addresses to some extent. As noted earlier, distinctions have been made between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained (Palmgreen, Wenner and Rayburn, 1980; cited by Kink and Hess, 2008) and between needs and motives (Kink and Hess, 2008). In fact, Karimi et al. (2014) consider gratifications sought as either "needs" or "motives" where the user has expectations of the gratifications they will obtain before they actually use the medium, while gratifications obtained are the gratifications experienced while using a specific medium. This is a useful distinction as it highlights that there may well be a discrepancy between user's expectations and the actual satisfaction they derive from using a particular social media platform. As such, a user will repeatedly use a medium if it satisfies or surpasses the gratifications sought (Palmgreen and Rayburn, 1979; cited by Karimi et al., 2014). While the reviewed literature does attempt to allay some of the questions raised by Swanson (1979), it could still be argued that concerns about the lack of clarity stem, in part, from an assumption that there is consensus on the meaning of these concepts due to what appears to be their inherent simplicity. The simplicity of words such as 'needs', 'motives' and 'uses',

may have inadvertently contributed to the lack of urgency or determination to precisely clarify what these terms mean in relation to this theory. However, one could suggest that it is the perceived simplicity of these U&G concepts that has contributed to its widespread use as a theoretical framework for examining the motivations for using social media in recent times.

Another criticism of this theory is reliance in some research on self-reporting by users which Ruggiero (2000) argues may be measuring an individual's perception and analysis of their own behaviour rather than their actual behaviour. Moreover, Alhabash and Ma (2017) contend that self-reporting on the amount of time users spend on any medium is unreliable as it depends on recollection, which it could be argued may be influenced by several factors including the user's perception of how they should use social media and, as highlighted by Alhabash and Ma (2017), their understanding of the question. Alhabash and Ma (2017) citing Junco (2013), emphasise significant variances between the time users specified they were on Facebook and the actual time they spent on it when monitored by computer software. Self-reporting however, is viewed by Swanson (1979), as a positive and welcome departure from the tradition of measuring mass communication effects although he laments the lack of investigation into how users comprehend and analyse message content and whether these explanations deliver the anticipated connections between needs, uses and the resulting gratifications.

U&G is often referred to as a research strategy and not a theory by both its opponents and advocates which is why it is frequently described as an 'approach' rather than a 'theory' (Swanson, 1979, p.44). In addition, it is also referred to as a methodology (Bracken and Lombard, 2001) or a framework (Al-Jabri, Sadiq Sohail and Ndubisi, 2015), further highlighting it as an approach as opposed to a theory. Indeed, Weiss (1976, p.133) concurs with this view stating 'the uses and gratifications approach is essentially atheoretical; for basically, it is a research strategy or heuristic orientation toward research' and as such, he asserts that the criticisms from some opponents 'of the absence of various kinds of theoretical linkages' are beyond the capabilities of this approach on its own. Notwithstanding, for the purposes of this research, U&G, whether considered a theory, an approach, a framework, or a methodology, is a valid and effective theoretical framework. U&G is a 'lens' (Al-Jabri, Sadiq Sohail and Ndubisi, 2015) through which to closely examine how expatriate teachers use social media to secure employment and the gratifications they derive from it that facilitates their determination to remain employed in AD schools given its heuristic orientation which facilitates the identification and classification of users' responses. Given that in U&G, researchers examine the degree to which individuals use media to satisfy a wide range of human needs, and the degree to which these needs are met (Bracken and Lombard, 2001), this approach lends itself to this study. Indeed, U&G has been used to examine how social media meets a range of needs and therefore makes it pertinent to the examination of the influence of social media on expatriate teachers whose needs range from securing employment in a foreign country, to overcoming the challenges, both personal and work-related, that come with working in a different cultural and educational context.

Despite the criticisms levied against U&G, it is worth pointing out a valid argument made by Kink and Hess (2008) about the approach as 'not one monolithic theory' but rather that it has been influenced by various fields and as such is still evolving. Indeed, Maslow's theory has been used as a guide to develop need theories such as U&G (Sun et al., 2017). Therefore, consideration will now be given to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it believed that it will further contribute to the understanding of the needs of expatriate teachers working in AD.

### *2.2.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Against this backdrop, Maslow's hierarchy of needs expands on expatriate teachers' needs and as with U&G, will be used as an heuristic to focus and organise the data. Indeed, Fisher



and Royster (2016) relate the issue of teacher retention to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in their attempts to understand the needs of mathematics teachers and how these needs can be met to minimise the high rates of attrition alluded to in Chapter 1. Notably, in a study conducted by Cao et al. (2013), the users' needs are examined through Maslow's theory to provide a clearer understanding of the reasons for using social network sites (SNSs). Their approach, they argue, is in contrast to previous research which 'has generally focused on identifying the determinants of motivations and evaluating' the apparent value of SNSs (Cao et al., 2013, p.173) through the use of U&G. In this study however, Maslow's theory will be used as a secondary theory due to, as highlighted by Wahba and Bridwell (1976, p.235) citing Miner and Dachler (1973), it proving 'to be a useful theory in generating the ideas, and as an a priori logical framework to explain diverse research findings.' Whilst acknowledging that both the 'uses and gratifications theory and the hierarchy of basic needs discuss motivations,' (Kang and Jung, 2014, p.377), in this inquiry Maslow's theory will be used to further clarify expatriate teachers' needs and the influence social media has on their recruitment and retention.

Maslow's theory consists of a 'hierarchy of motivational needs' (Maslow, 1954; cited by Cao et al., 2013, p.171;). Taking guidance from Cao et al. (2013), the need for food and sleep is the most basic level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs while stability and security needs fall under safety needs in level 2 of the hierarchy. Social needs at level 3, include the need to belong and be loved, while self-esteem needs at level 4 are concerned with respect, recognition and achievement. Self-actualization needs, which are at the top of the hierarchy, level 5, refer to an individual's aspirations to attain self-fulfilment and reach their full potential. While it is recognised that the descriptions provided here are brief, an in-depth examination of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is beyond the scope of this study given its secondary role in informing some of the needs that will be addressed in conjunction with U&G.

It is worth pointing out that while it is intended that these needs are considered hierarchical, with each level requiring satisfaction before progression to the next level (Hall and Nougaim, 1968), in this inquiry, needs are not deemed hierarchical. Instead, the needs considered in this study are viewed as non-hierarchical and can therefore occur at any stage of an expatriate teacher's experience given Wahba and Bridwell's (1976, p.236) contention 'that the idea of a hierarchy may or may not be operative according to the situation.' Indeed, Fallatah and Syed (2018, p.42) argue that there is 'no evidence to support the theory that an increased need satisfaction should lead to an increase in need strength in the next higher level of need.' Therefore, given that satisfaction is considered to be 'a relative concept which differs from person to person and context to context' (Fallatah and Syed, 2018, p.47), and the possible situational nature of the model where an individual can move up or down the hierarchy based on the situation (Hall and Noigaim, 1968), it could be argued that satisfaction of social needs, for example, does not necessarily result in self-esteem needs intensifying. It is suggested here that for the expatriate teacher, these needs can occur concurrently or in a different order based on an individual's context and personal circumstances.

Despite Maslow's hierarchy of needs identifying five levels, this inquiry will focus on levels 3, 4 and 5, namely social needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualisation; as it is believed that these relate specifically to the use of social media by expatriate teachers. Previous research has related the use of SNSs to Maslow's hierarchy of needs focusing specifically on social needs and self-actualization (Cao et al., 2013). With reference to social needs, Fallatah and Syed (2018) state that:

The absence of friendship, encouragement and support of fellow workers and managers makes the employee feel motivated, as never before, to attain this need with great intensity. (p.29)

It is therefore suggested that for the expatriate teacher who may not have the familiar friendship, encouragement and support from colleagues they worked with in their home country, the quest to seek support and encouragement from other expatriate teachers on social media will be fervent. The need to belong becomes vital (Fallatah and Syed, 2018) to the expatriate teacher with social media offering a means by which to fulfil this need. With self-actualisation, the 'need to have a sense of professional maturity and career growth' (Fallatah and Syed, 2018, p.31) as well as 'playing a role in the community, developing new skills, and gaining opportunities for advancement' (Kim, 2000; cited by Sun et al., 2017, p.768;) is as important to expatriate teachers as it is to teachers working in their home country. The role of social media in providing expatriate teachers with the information that assists them in determining how to meet this need is worthy of consideration.

Self-esteem is included in this inquiry due to Sharplin's (2009) (citing Churchill and Carrington, 2000) contention that the movement of teachers to new locations affects their self-esteem. The significance of recognition and respect from other teachers on social media is worthy of examination given Taormina and Gao's (2013) definition of esteem needs which includes both self-esteem and esteem from others. They state that self-esteem relates to one's feelings of 'worthiness, merit, or value' while esteem from others is defined as 'the attitudinal evaluation and respect a person receives from people regarding that person's nature or character and their related feelings about that person's worthiness, merit, or value as a person.' (Taormina and Gao, 2013, p.158-159). Moreover, Sun et al. (2017) citing Kim (2000) state that esteem needs also include the recognition and respect individuals gain from contributing to a network community. It could be argued therefore that the interactions that occur on social media are undoubtedly influenced by expatriate teachers' esteem needs, and consequently, it could be argued their retention, hence the inclusion in this study.

### *2.2.3 Types of gratifications*

The division of gratifications into process gratification, content gratification (Cutler and Danowski, 1980) and social gratification (Stafford, Stafford and Schkade, 2004) is useful when determining the satisfactions that users derive from using social media given Swanson's (1979) queries regarding gratifications in U&G. These categorisations are not dissimilar to the three sources of audience gratifications referred to in earlier work by Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1973, p.514) 'media content, exposure to the media *per se*, and the social context'. It could be argued that these three sources directly influence the content, process and social gratifications of users. According to Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004), process gratifications refers the satisfactions derived from using the media itself, for example, through searching or surfing, while content gratifications refer to the information or knowledge derived from using the media whereas social gratifications is defined as the user's ability to interact with other users on a social level. Gan (2018) also draws attention to affection gratification which includes expressing concern and encouraging other users in a caring and helpful manner. These four categorisations of gratifications obtained will be revisited later in this chapter in relation to gratifications sought.

## **2.3 Defining expatriate**

Given that this research focuses specifically on non-citizen teachers educating students in government schools in AD, it is worth clarifying what is meant by the term expatriate. A concise definition of 'the population under study is a key step in being able to maximize the comparative utility of research findings and the application of research to practice.' (Doherty, Richardson and Thorn, 2013, p.101). Although referring specifically to international school teachers, that is teachers teaching in international schools, Bunnell (2017) questions whether these teachers are actually considered expatriates which begs the question therefore of what an expatriate is and how the reviewed literature defines expatriates.

Although defining female expatriates specifically, Hutchings and Michailova (2017) provide a good starting point in that they highlight key features of expatriates, which include departing from one's country of residence or origin to work in a host country for a specified or undetermined length of time. Echoing similar views, Andresen et al. (2014, p.2308) define an expatriate as 'an individual who moves to another country while changing the dominant place of residence and executes legal work abroad' although they do not make reference to the length of expatriation.

### *2.3.1 Types of expatriates*

The reviewed literature on expatriates often makes reference to OEs (organisationally assigned expatriates) and SIEs (self-initiated expatriates). OEs are, 'so labelled since they have been assigned by their parent organisations to the foreign location' (Selmer and Luring, 2012, p.667). According to Andresen et al. (2014), with assigned expatriates (AEs also known as OEs):

the first key binding activity to expatriate is taken by the organization and the legal decision of employment is made by the current work contract partner, usually in the home country. Organizational mobility of AEs is internal. (p.2308)

In sharp contrast, with SIEs they state that:

the first key binding activity to move internationally is solely made by the individual who initiates the expatriation. The legal decision of employment is made by a new work contract partner – either a foreign unit of the organization where the SIE is currently employed (Intra-SIEs) or a new organization abroad (Inter-SIEs). (p.2308)

This distinction highlights the leading role that the organisation plays in determining the expatriation of the OE, while in contrast, the SIE instigates the move to work abroad although Andresen et al. (2014) point out that this may be facilitated by a new employer (inter-SIE) or the current employer (intra-SIE).

### *2.3.2 Self-initiated expatriates*

Although Selmer, Andresen and Cerdin (2017, p.198) point out the disparity and ambiguity in defining SIEs, they do contend that despite the multiple definitions available, there is a common consensus that SIEs 'are self-initiated' which citing Fay and Frese (2001), they indicate that 'self-initiation typically includes self-starting, proactivity and persistence'. This echoes Doherty, Richardson and Thorn's (2013) view of the pivotal role that SIEs play in deciding to move from their home country. Expatriate teachers in AD public schools meet Selmer and Luring's (2012) criteria for SIEs, namely:

- (1) regular employment.
- (2) foreign national; and
- (3) self-initiated. (p.667)

They add that 'SIEs are gainfully employed abroad and have acquired their job of their own volition without being assigned to the host location by an organisation' (Selmer and Luring, 2012, p.667). The decision to move rests with the SIE and not the organisation regardless of whether they are an intra-SIE or an inter-SIE (Andresen et al., 2014). It could be perceived that there are greater challenges associated with being a SIE than an OE given the limited input from the host country employer although some SIEs might argue that the freedom of choice in destination, length of expatriation and employer, offers flexibility that far outweighs the benefits of being an OE. Acknowledging that some SIEs may receive support in relocating from the new employer, Doherty, Richardson and Thorn (2013)

reiterate that their classification remains the same because the individual has sought employment in the host country on their own. With this consideration at the forefront, it is suggested therefore that expatriate teachers are inter-SIEs as described by Andresen et al. (2014). This suggestion aligns with Cerdin and Selmer's (2014) definition of SIEs as:

expatriates who self-initiate their international relocation, with the intention of regular employment and temporary stay, and with skills/professional qualifications. (p.1293)

The addition of skills or professional qualifications as a further characteristic of SIEs applies to non-citizen public school teachers who are required to possess the relevant teaching qualifications prior to being offered a position in AD public schools. This therefore, is the definition that will be used for the purposes of this study.

## **2.4 Defining social media**

The term social media is broadly used with reference to internet technologies that allow users to communicate, share and interact using text, audio, images and video. Closer examination of this term is therefore necessary at this point so that a common understanding is reached for the purposes of this study. It is worth highlighting at this juncture, the contention by Sundar and Limperos (2013) that previous references to "media" was limited to:

a handful of mass communication tools such as newspapers, radio, television, and film, the current academic conception of media is broader, reflecting the proliferation of new communication technologies in recent times. (p.505)

Social media focuses specifically on what Sundar and Limperos (2013, p.505) refer to as the 'venues on these channels' such as SNSs rather than the devices, such as smart phones, that facilitate access to these channels which enable users 'to not only interact with these "media" (human-computer interaction) but also interact through them to communicate with other users (computer-mediated communication)'.

Despite the frequent use of this term, a clear definition of what social media is, remains scant in the reviewed literature. Echoing this view, Wyrwoll (2014) indicates that the literature does not clearly define what social media is, suggesting that there is a misconceived shared view that due to the wide use of the term, there is consensus on its meaning and application. On a similar note, Carr and Hayes (2015) attribute this misconception to knowledge of existing technology, and thus concurring with Wyrwoll (2014), emphasise the lack of a common understanding of social media. They instead point to a greater prevalence in agreement of the tools that are classified as social media. For example, rather than defining social media, Bosman and Zagenczyk (2011) point to the facilities afforded by social media including sharing, connecting and collaborating. Airing similar features, but not articulating what social media is, Agarwal (2011) highlights its characteristics including accessibility, permanence, reach, recency and usability. He explains that social media sites are easy to use and alter at any time enabling instant communication with minimal delay, adding that they can be accessed globally and are publicly available. While these characteristics are useful in pointing out the benefits of social media, a lack of consensus on the definition of social media is apparent. Bearing in mind that social media is not static and continues to develop (Hernandez-Serrano, 2011; Hinton and Hjorth, 2013; Carr and Hayes, 2015), it is not surprising that this lack of consensus prevails. Carr and Hayes (2015) advocate for a definition of social media that is as applicable today as it will be in the next twenty years, which it could be argued, is a challenge as it would need to incorporate technologies that have yet to be conceived, let alone developed.

There have been some attempts to define social media in recent times with some common ground being reached in these definitions. According to Sheldon (2015):

Social media technologies take on many different forms, including social network sites like Facebook and Twitter, blogs, wikis, online video and photo-sharing sites (e.g., Pinterest), rating and social bookmarking sites, and video/text chatting sites (e.g., Skype). (p.ix)

While this is useful in providing some examples of the different types of social media platforms available and how they are used, it does not clarify what social media is nor does it account for future developments in social media as advocated by Carr and Hayes (2015). In fact, Wyrwoll (2014, p.16) contends that consensus is yet to be reached 'about which platforms and services belong to social media and which do not' further highlighting the lack of clarity surrounding this area of research. She does acknowledge that while research into social media is still in its infancy, social media has enabled people to publicly share information provided they have access to the Internet. Wyrwoll (2014) states that social media consists of platforms that comprise of content published online by users who are not required to possess any programming skills, thus resonating with the views of Agarwal (2011) as previously mentioned.

A simpler definition which offers some clarity on the meaning of social media and its associated tools is provided by Denecke and Stewart (2011) who indicate that:

Social media is the use of technology combined with social interactions in which individuals can engage in one-to-many conversations, using electronic communication tools. (p.355)

While this definition focuses on social interactions and the resulting conversations, Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) definition highlights the technology that enables this interaction:

Social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. (p.61)

Similar to Denecke and Stewart (2011), Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) definition indicates the involvement of users in the creation of content that can be shared. In defining 'user generated content', they highlight the role of the end user in creating media content that is publicly available which, again, resonates with the definition provided by Denecke and Stewart (2011). As is the case with the definition provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), reference to Web 2.0 technology is often made in discussions surrounding social media, a point which will be revisited in the next section.

Despite these differences in opinion, the attributes of social media: social presence, temporal structure, media richness, permanence, replicability and mobility (Humphreys, 2016), seem to resonate somewhat in the definitions provided. According to Humphreys (2016), social presence is considered the quantity and quality of information presented in a message while media richness focuses more on the type of information transmitted between users, for example text or video messages. She adds that permanence considers whether previous messages are accessible to users while replicability focuses on how easily a message can be reused. Mobility relates to how easily a device can be used to access data from different locations while temporal structure refers to the level of presence when communication takes place (Humphreys, 2016). It could be argued that social media is of greatest benefit if it is accessible from any location and enables users to share and generate different types of data that is available whether in real time or at the users' convenience. While highlighting similar features of social media to those indicated by Denecke and Stewart (2011) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Kietzmann et al. (2011) interestingly

include mobile technologies in their definition, drawing attention to, it could be argued, the mobility (Humphreys, 2016) of social media.

#### *2.4.1 Web 2.0*

In some of the reviewed literature, the terms Web 2.0 and social media technology are used interchangeably (McNaught et al., 2011; Purchase and Letch, 2011) or simultaneously (Henderson and Bowley, 2010; Li and Ma, 2011) highlighting again the lack of clarity and shared consensus on their meaning. This is understandable as Anderson (2007, p.14) contends that 'there is considerable speculation as to what Web 2.0 might be', a view echoed by Todd Stephens (2009) highlighting again the ambiguity and lack of consensus surrounding these terms. There does however seem to be some consensus in the reviewed literature on the collective, collaborative and interactive nature of Web 2.0 technology enabling the exchange of information (Devedzic and Gasevic, 2010; Choudhury, 2014; Irani et al., 2017) with emphasis placed on the role of users in producing the content (Todd Stephens, 2009; Hinton and Hjorth, 2013). Web 2.0 is described as 'a participatory, read/write platform' which enables users to communicate, and jointly create and share content (Jimoyiannis et al., 2013, p.248). This emphasises the central role of user-involvement in creating and editing content. Jimoyiannis et al. (2013, p.248) identify social media as a type of Web 2.0 technology which enables users to participate in sharing and distributing content. Web 2.0 enables users to focus on generating content as the technical aspects of formatting and presenting information are managed by the computer (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013). With this in mind, Web 2.0 can be viewed as an enabler, empowering users to create content that can be shared.

#### *2.4.2 Social media platforms*

As previously mentioned, social media consists of different platforms including blogs and SNSs. Humphreys (2016) indicates that SNSs are a genre of social media alongside chatrooms, message boards and blogs, clarifying at least the difference between social media and SNSs. SNSs enable users to create and share content, communicate and connect with other people (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) although there may be variations in what users see and what they can access between different SNSs (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). It is this web-based connection and communication between users that is of interest in this research and how this influences the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD. Additionally, Hargittai's (2008) contention that the groups that users belong to online are a reflection of the networks in their daily life suggests that expatriate teachers who use SNSs are more likely to share similar views and outlooks to those in their online community, which in itself warrants further examination. Concurring with this view, Humphreys (2016) states that online and offline social worlds are inextricably linked with online communication occasionally being used to develop offline social networks, and offline social links being maintained and reinforced online. This view highlights the blurring of lines between online and offline social networks and draws attention to the opportunity that expatriate teachers have to maintain existing offline social networks online while further increasing their offline networks through online communication. This is critical for expatriate teachers who are in a different geographical location to their pre-existing offline social networks and therefore need to develop new networks online for offline engagements that support their adjustment and integration into a new professional, social and cultural environment.

It is worth briefly highlighting at this point that there are different types of SNSs for different purposes and demographics, with varying access limits and amounts, and types of content (Davison et al., 2016). For example, LinkedIn enables users to post their professional skills and attributes with a view to either securing employment or extending their professional network while Facebook is used to make and share content with friends and family (Ladkin and Buhalis, 2016). SNSs are a sub-category of social media (Carr and Hayes, 2015) which suggests that there are other categories of social media of which SNSs is just one. Indeed,

Gan (2018) includes IM as a form of social media. WhatsApp, a commonly used IM platform enables both individual and group communication (Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014; cited by Addi-Racchah and Yemini, 2018). What is evident in the reviewed literature is the interaction, be it social or professional, that these social media platforms afford their users.

#### *2.4.3 A conceptual model of social media*

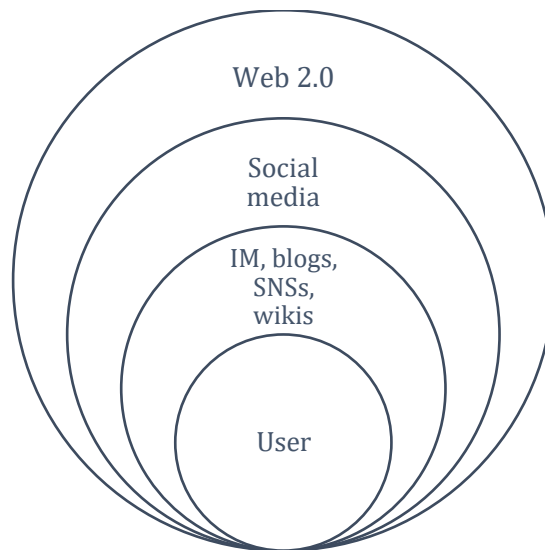
Resonating with the reviewed literature is the definition provided by Henderson and Bowley (2010) who point to the collaborative nature of online applications and technologies in social media that enable users to generate content, share information and collaborate with other users. This appears to be the theme running through the definitions in extant literature on social media. Notwithstanding, for the purposes of this study, and due to its clarity and lack of ambiguity, the definition of social media provided by Carr and Hayes (2015) will be used:

Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others.  
(p.50)

This definition draws on concepts previously highlighted such as interaction and user-generated content, but also determines the scale of interaction, either to a narrow audience or a wider group of users, indicating the importance of choice in what is presented and to whom it is presented. Noteworthy, this definition illuminates the active role of the user which resonates with the contention in U&G that users are active in their choice and use of media rather than passive audiences.

From the reviewed literature, a conceptual model of Web 2.0, social media, social media platforms and the user is proposed in Figure 2.1. While there may be some disagreement in the diagrammatical representation of these concepts due to the prevailing lack of consensus or common understanding, an attempt has been made to clarify the stance taken in this study. As previously argued, Web 2.0 can be viewed as an enabler that makes it easier for users with limited technical ability to create content (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013). It can be considered the overarching web-based technology that includes social media (Jimoyiannis et al., 2013) which spans across all connected devices (O'Reilly, 2005). SNSs, IM, blogs and wikis are presented as forms or genres of social media (Humphreys, 2016).

Although a lack of agreement prevails on what some of these terms mean, a common thread runs through the reviewed literature, that is, the central role that the user plays in generating content (Henderson and Bowley, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Wyrwoll, 2014), communicating (Pegrum, 2009), sharing, collaborating, connecting (Henderson and Bowley, 2010; Bosman and Zagenczyk, 2011) and interacting (Denecke and Stewart, 2011) with other users in this web-based environment.



**Figure 2.1** A conceptual model of Web 2.0, social media, social media platforms and the user

#### 2.4.4 Social media users

Given the widespread use of social media globally, it is worth examining who uses social media and for what purposes. Although Thelwall (2009, p.38) contends that there is no 'typical SNS user because different general SNSs with similar features can have widely different audiences', some attempts have been made to make a distinction between the different types of users. The typology, that is, the classification of users based on their media usage (Brandtzaeg, 2010), is useful in determining not only the influence of social media on expatriate teachers, but whether the way they use social media determines this influence. A range of typologies have been proposed following research into the types of activities users engage in on social media and the amount of time they spend using social media (e.g. Constantinides, Alarcón del Amo and Lorenzo Romero, 2010; Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011; Kurtulus, Ozkan and Ozturk, 2015; Bulut and Dogan, 2016; Chung et al., 2016) which highlight the demographic variations and motivations for using social media in countries such as Turkey, the Netherlands and the US. Given the overlap in these and other typologies, and the similarities in some of the characteristics of the different users, a comprehensive review of the of existing literature by Brandtzaeg (2010), in which he developed what he refers to as a unified Media-User Typology (MUT) is valuable in that it draws on a large body of research and narrows down the different typologies into one distinguishable model. In this model, the categories are based on how the media is used, the amount of time spent using the media, the content or activities favoured, and the media platform used, for example SNSs. The resulting model includes:

- Advanced users – use all the media platforms regularly for a wide range of activities including generating content.
- Debaters – specifically use blogs and SNSs for discussions and for sharing and exchanging information.
- Instrumental users – tend to use media more for work-related purposes, shopping and to compare products and less for entertainment.
- Entertainment users/socialisers – use media for gaming, watching videos, generating content and shopping.
- Lurkers – use SNSs, user-generated and shopping sites to while away time and observe activity.
- Sporadics – do not regularly use media for any specific purpose and have limited experience and very little interest in communications technology.
- Non-users – do not engage in any online activities nor do they use any media platforms.



Noteworthy will be how expatriate teachers categorise themselves in terms of their social media use and the influence this use has on the gratifications obtained while using social media. What is apparent at this point, and as stated by Yoo and Jeong (2017), is the influence of SNSs on human lives beyond their use as a tool for communication.

#### 2.4.5 Social media literacy

At this point, it is worth reviewing the skills and competencies that social media users require in this environment and whether this affects how media content is received and processed. Extant literature in this area draws attention to media literacy when exploring how users of a range of media make meaning in this environment. The concept of media literacy originated from 'traditional mass media such as print and broadcast', with new media technologies advancing research in this area (Vanwynsberghe and Verdegem, 2013, p.2). According to Livingstone (2014, p.3), citing Aufderheide (1993), 'media literacy is the capacity to access, understand, evaluate and create communication in all forms.' Although this definition does not relate specifically to social media, it provides an indication of the skills that users need when using social media. Noteworthy is the capacity to create communication which arguably, is a key affordance of social media. Pointing to the importance of media literacy, Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020, p.2) argue that 'media literacy will reduce negative media effects and maximize positive ones.' This implies that the ability to access, understand and evaluate media content will mitigate the ill-effects of the media, and instead, capitalise on its inherent benefits.

##### 2.4.5.1 Defining social media literacy

Although social media literacy is embedded in media literacy, the distinguishing features associated with social media such as creation of content and infinite opportunities for interaction, require a distinctive approach (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020) and thus a more specific definition that reflects the affordances in this environment. In discussions surrounding social media literacy, the concept of competence is often highlighted. Xu et al. (2019, p.738) define social media 'competence as possessing the knowledge and confidence to engage appropriately and effectively with social media'. Noteworthy is the reference to not only knowledge, but confidence while using social media. In addition, engagement in an appropriate and effective manner, could arguably improve the potential of the gratifications sought being obtained while using social media. Social media literacy involves 'decoding, evaluating, and communicating' while also understanding the wider digital media and the affordances available from a social perspective (Festl, 2020, p.3). Airing the same views regarding decoding, evaluating and communication, Livingstone (2014) relates these social media literacy skills to the representation of media through text, images and the devices themselves, and to the social interactions that occur on social media. It appears therefore that key skills such as decoding and evaluating are critical to social media literacy, as is the communication that occurs in this environment. However, it could be argued that increased social interactions will lead to increased risks on social media given that the more digitally competent a social media user is, the greater the likelihood that they will engage in risky behaviour such as having a substantial number of connections online (Livingstone and Helsper, 2010; cited by Livingstone, 2014). Indicating different competencies, Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020, p.2) define social media literacy as:

*the extent to which cognitive and affective structures are present among users to ensure the risks of interactions with social media content are mitigated and the opportunities are maximised' (p.2 italics in original)*

Cognitive structures are defined as 'sets of organized knowledge in the users' memory that provide the user with sufficient resources to process social media content adequately' (Lang, 2017; cited by Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020, p.3). Echoing similar views to those of Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020, p.2) and advancing ideas from media literacy, Vanwynsberghe and Verdegem (2013) describe social media literacy:

as the practical, cognitive, and affective competencies needed to access, analyze, evaluate, and create social media content across a variety of contexts. (p.4)

Similarly, the Future Classroom Lab (FCL, 2020) also draw attention to the importance of cognitive, technical and emotional skills, while using social media to look for information, communicate and generate content, in addition to avoiding and solving problems both from a professional and social perspective. Commonality can be seen across these definitions with reference being made to cognitive and affective or emotional competencies. Both FCL (2020) and Vanwysberghe and Verdegem (2013) highlight the practical or technical competencies required by social media literate users. Interestingly, FCL (2020) and Schreurs and Vandebosch (2020) draw attention to social media literacy enabling users to avoid problems and maximise opportunities in this environment. Arguably, this could influence the gratifications obtained while using social media.

Practical or technical competencies refer to functional skills to access social media and the accompanying content as well as developing and sharing user generated content (Vanwysberghe et al., 2015). On the other hand, cognitive competencies refer to the assessment and appraisal of the content on social media (Livingstone, 2004; cited by Daneels and Vanwysberghe, 2017), and the ability to critically understand 'social media content in its context, relevance, and trustworthiness' (Vanwysberghe, 2014; cited by Daneels and Vanwysberghe, 2017, p.4). It is worth noting that Vanwysberghe et al. (2015) refer to affective competencies as attitudes. With this in mind, Gagne's (1984, p.383) definition of attitude as 'an internal state that influences the choice of personal action' is useful to highlight the difference between cognitive and affective competence. More specifically, affective competencies include 'personal opinion on typical social media characteristics such as creativity, interactivity and community development', 'attitude towards the communication process' or how information is exchanged on social media, and 'attitudes towards social media users' (Vanwysberghe et al., 2015, p.286). Arguably, these competencies could affect the gratifications sought and obtained in social media given that expatriate teachers' ability to appraise and evaluate social media content, and understand it in relation to its context, credibility and application to their unique needs, may determine how they perceive its usefulness in satisfying their needs. Moreover, the attitudes they adopt while communicating with other expatriate teachers on social media may result in more positive interactions, and when this is not the case, a determination to seek more gratifying interactions on other social media groups or platforms.

#### 2.4.5.2 Application of social media literacy in educational settings

The reviewed literature highlights the application of social media literacy to different users of social media and how the competencies mentioned above can help them effectively navigate this environment. In her research into how children learn to interpret risky opportunities on SNSs, Livingstone (2014) found that social media literacy was affected by children's age and their social context and thus calls for the empowering of children so that empowerment becomes the focus, rather than their vulnerability while using SNSs. This stance suggests that social media literacy can be viewed as empowering, enabling users to fully capitalise on the affordances of social media.

To effectively integrate social media literacy into education, Vanwysberghe and Verdegem (2013) put forward a conceptual framework that is centred around the three competencies previously mentioned, namely technical or practical, cognitive and affective competencies. Vanwysberghe and Verdegem (2013, p.6) contend that the three competencies are interdependent with cognitive competencies required to 'analyze and evaluate social media content' which depends on the 'practical competencies to open and read content and a positive attitude towards this behavior'. They argue that students should be taught the three competencies by media literacy teachers who should include strategies to deal with

the effects of using social media. In concluding, they surmise that dealing with the effects of social media could be viewed as another social media literacy skill. This arguably would lead to empowerment as advocated by Livingstone (2014), as students would possess the necessary skills to deal with potential risks they may encounter while using social media.

Insightful research conducted by Probst (2017 p.45) investigates how social media literacy education can be used 'as part of an individualized education plan (IEP) intervention for improving the social and emotional outcomes of students with disabilities'. His research offers possible strategies and highlights encouraging opportunities to support students by using social media literacy education to develop beneficial social and emotional learning skills by 'demonstrating how self-awareness, perception, and perspective-taking are engaged when evaluating specific media' (Probst, 2017, p.54). To this end, he calls for professional development to be offered to both new and existing special education teachers to develop social media literacy strategies for 'analyzing, evaluating, creating, and acting responsibly in the digital world while remediating poor social and emotional skills commonly associated with many social, emotional, and behavioral disorders' (Probst, 2017, p.45).

In their research on the development of social media literacies in pre-teens, Pangrazio and Gaibisso (2020) advocate that educational programs move beyond teaching cybersafety by controlling access to social media, but rather move towards supporting the development of social media literacy thus arguably, empowering pre-teens as advocated by Livingstone (2014). They stress that 'knowing what to share on social media and *who* to share with requires technological *and* social literacies' (Pangrazio and Gaibisso, 2020, p.60). Their research highlights 'the need to support the development of social media literacies, including: representing digital identities across contexts; understanding the implications of personal data generation; and managing and protecting privacy in networked contexts' (Pangrazio and Gaibisso, 2020, p.62). Echoing Probst (2017), they call for exploration of the opportunities that are being offered to teachers to address this and how teachers' own experiences and prior knowledge affects how they develop social media literacy in students. Both Pangrazio and Gaibisso (2020) and Probst (2017) highlight the need for teachers to develop social media literacy before they can be expected to do the same with their students.

#### 2.4.5.3 Application of social media literacy in teacher training

Bearing in mind the above expectations on teachers to develop social media literacy in students, Nagle (2018) calls for social media literacy to be included in teacher education. Her recommendation is warranted given Manca, Bocconi and Gleason's (2021) contention that studies that examine the use of social media by teachers and students focus more on the social media skills of students, with a limited number focusing on the social media skills of teachers. This validates Nagle's (2018) appeal to include social media literacy when training teachers. In her review of the literature pertaining to pre-service teachers, Nagle (2018) found that while teacher educators promoted the use of social media, specifically, Twitter, to enable pre-service teachers to participate and collaborate in professional learning networks, the experiences of these teachers in this environment were not always positive. Twitter is a microblogging social media platform that enables users to tweet within a 280-character limit (Nagle, 2018).

The reviewed literature highlights some useful strategies to develop the technical competencies that Vanwynsberghe et al. (2015) indicate are part of demonstrating social media literacy. While Nagle (2018) acknowledges the benefits that social media offers by enabling teachers to engage collaboratively, she calls for the development of social media literacy where teacher educators and pre-service teachers understand how communication works within social media, and the affordances and drawbacks of different platforms within this space. To further promote social media literacy, pre-service teachers should be taught

the tools first and then assisted 'to bridge personal uses of social media to uses conducive within an educational space' (Nagle, 2018, p.92). Moreover, those educating new teachers should observe activity on social media so that they can offer support to ensure that there is an understanding of the different ways social media can be utilised and experienced, possibly in unpremeditated ways (Nagle, 2018), again, further enhancing pre-service teachers' technical skills.

To develop the requisite affective competencies as indicated by Vanwysberghe et al. (2015), which would enable pre-service teachers to effectively manage their emotional state and attitude towards other users while using social media, Nagle (2018) makes some recommendations. While recognizing the benefits that social media offers new teachers, for example, creating networks for professional learning in which connections can be established with experienced teachers and resources shared, Nagle (2018) advocates that teachers should be given a choice as to whether they use social media, and when using it, the option to withdraw their participation. To support those who may be experiencing abusive content on social media, Nagle (2018) encourages teacher educators to facilitate discussions about different ways to deal with this, which may inadvertently help new teachers who have not had this experience to develop an appreciation of the differences in experiences that can occur online. Equipping new teachers with supportive tools to deal with unpleasant content on social media, together with knowledge and strategies to manage trolling, which aims to disrupt online communities, is necessary for social media literate users (Nagle, 2018).

In order to develop the cognitive competencies described by Daneels and Vanwysberghe (2017) citing Livingstone (2004), Nagle (2018, p.91) advocates the critical examination of 'the values, and norms of different social media tools 'to frame students' personal uses'. In addition, while highlighting that access and experiences in social media may differ, she advocates that discussions between teacher educators and pre-service teachers examine both their professional and personal experiences, and critically appraise how social media is influencing their experiences, and how these experiences are influencing them. This would, as indicated by Daneels and Vanwysberghe (2017) citing Vanwysberghe (2014), support pre-service teachers in understanding the content on social media in terms of its relevance, credibility and context. Following on from the previous paragraph, the ability to identify trolling and its intended consequences would emphasise the cognitive competence of pre-service teachers as they are capable of appraising the content on social media and consequently, determine its relevance and trustworthiness relative to their needs. Thus, as highlighted by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), mitigate the risks associated with interactions on social media.

It is worth pointing out that while Nagle's (2018) review of the literature is intended to support pre-service teachers in developing social media literacy skills and competencies and provide teacher educators with the strategies to meet this goal, these strategies could arguably be applicable to expatriate teachers. While they may be experienced in curriculum delivery and educational pedagogy, expatriate teachers may not be conversant with social media literacy or have had any support in developing the above competencies in a professional environment. It will be insightful to note what level of social media literacy expatriate teachers demonstrate, and how this empowers their experiences, and arguably, the gratifications obtained, while using social media to support their ongoing determination to remain employed in AD.

## **2.5 U&G in social media**

Given that U&G originated in communications literature, it is germane to social media (Whiting and Williams, 2013) where interaction with the media and communication between users is evident (Sundar and Limperos, 2013). Indeed, 'social interaction is a fundamental component' of social media unlike other forms of media such as radio and

television which are not typically social (Wang, Tchernev and Solloway, 2012, p.1829). According to Al-Jabri, Sadiq Sohail and Ndubisi (2015), social interaction is a person's willingness or ability to develop relationships with other people. Humphreys (2016) citing Blumler (1979) indicates that media is consumed for reward and to fulfil some purpose. The focus in U&G according to Sheldon (2015), is not the media content, but rather the user and their choice of media based on their needs. In their extensive research on social media use, needs and gratifications among college students, Wang, Tchernev and Solloway (2012) distinguish between four different types of needs:

emotional needs (fun/entertainment, to relax/kill time), cognitive needs (information, studying/work), social needs (personal, professional), and habitual needs (habits/background noise). (p.1832)

Their research revealed that an increase in either emotional, cognitive, social or habitual needs led to an increase in social media use with social needs having the most significant effects. The significance of social needs is noteworthy given that they are also included in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Interestingly, Wang, Tchernev and Solloway (2012) found that while emotional and cognitive needs were significantly gratified by the use of social media, this was not the case for both social and habitual needs. So, while their research highlighted that college students used social media with the view that it would gratify their social needs, they did not indicate the fulfilment of the gratifications sought. They argue in fact, that the lack of fulfilment of social and habitual needs can actually encourage increased use of social media, to which they attribute the rising popularity of social media. This point further emphasises the importance of social needs when examining the influence of social media on expatriate teachers. Wang, Tchernev and Solloway (2012, p.2832) do contend that while their research looked at a general definition of social media, a closer examination of specific types of social media may have revealed different effects on 'social gratifications'. One could further argue that different features within specific social media platforms may also reveal varying degrees of social gratifications that may not be initially apparent when looking at one platform as a whole.

In U&G, it is therefore critical to determine the motives that an individual has in using a specific medium (Ferris and Hollenbaugh, 2018). The goal, as highlighted by Humphreys (2016), determines most uses and gratifications. Citing Higgins (1997), she highlights that a goal is something someone wants to achieve or, interestingly and noteworthy, something someone wants to avoid. Adding weight to the importance of goals, Orchard et al. (2014, p.389) state that 'media users are goal-directed in their usage, seeking out specific gratifications' to meet their specific requirements which are determined by their 'individual psychological and sociological factors.' These social and psychological traits of a user determine their needs which subsequently influences the methods the individual uses to satisfy those needs with the goal of achieving an explicit result (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1973). Therefore, it could be argued that information derived from social media may help users avoid situations that fail to meet their expectations or that do not help them fulfil a specific purpose. Thus, while social media provides users with information which is often generated by other users, the use of this information differs according to an individual's goals and personal circumstances. Consequently, the gratifications sought and obtained will vary vastly from one individual to another, and even within the same individual, from one specific time and goal to another. Indeed, Hunt, Atkin and Krishnan (2012) concluded from their research that the reasons for using SNSs changed over time with users originally using Facebook for interpersonal communication and then for entertainment. This further emphasises the complexity of examining the influence of social media on individuals given their ever-changing circumstances and experiences.

### 2.5.1 Active as opposed to passive users

Contrary to Sheldon's (2015) assertion that the focus in U&G is not the media content, but rather the user and their choice of media based on their needs, Dolan et al. (2016) citing Swanson (1987) emphasise the significance of content in social media when exploring U&G. They point out that users are not passive in their selection or use of social media, but rather that they engage and interact with it. Adding weight to this argument, Sundar and Limperos (2013, p.504), stress that people who use the internet are so active that they are referred to as "users" as opposed to "audiences". They add that "Usage implies volitional action, not simply passive reception" (Sundar and Limperos, 2013, p.504). It could be argued therefore that users actively choose social media platforms based on whether its content meets their needs and that their contribution to social media further serves their goals at a specific time. Both Wang, Tchernev and Solloway (2012) and Park and Lee (2014) echo these views of users being active and suggest that U&G has facilitated this understanding and that users' selection of media is determined by their various needs. This concurs with Bracken and Lombard's (2001, p.103) view that users are 'rational and self-aware' and Weiyan's (2015, p.77) assessment that the 'selection and use of media is purposive, goal-directed and motivated to satisfy' the needs of users, be they social or psychological. These goals are not static but evolve based on personal situations, contextual environment and phase in an individual's life.

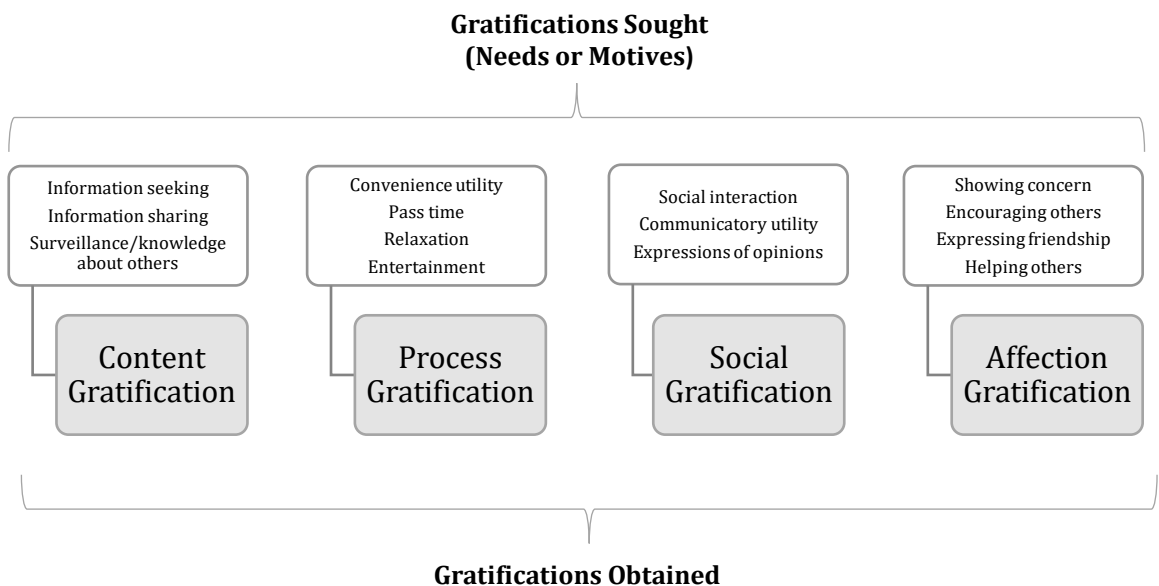
Critically, and as highlighted by Ferris and Hollenbaugh (2018, p.52), the role of the individual in social media is not limited to creating content but extends to choosing 'who and what is in their network', and interacting and influencing other peoples' experiences, which they argue aligns 'with the active-user perspective' highlighted in U&G. Indeed, Whiting and Williams (2013) found in their research (see **APPENDIX B**), ten uses and gratifications themes indicating why people use social media. This concurs with Dolan et al. (2016) and Ferris and Hollenbaugh's (2018) views of active rather than passive use of social media and the views expressed by Phua, Jin and Kim (2017, p.115) that 'people receive gratifications through the media which satisfy their informational, social and leisure needs.' Relatedly, social needs are the biggest driver for individuals to use social media, with social media enabling users to create, maintain and support social relationships (Wang, Tchernev and Solloway, 2012). Noteworthy, from the extensive research conducted by Whiting and Williams (2013) is the significance of social interaction and information seeking, 88 percent and 80 percent respectively to users of social media, which points to the importance of the content on social media in meeting the needs of the user. Of further interest is the fact that while 80 percent of users indicated that they used social media to seek information, only 40 percent stated that they used social media to share information which suggests an imbalance where users are more concerned about fulfilling their own needs rather than meeting the needs of others.

It appears therefore that reciprocity is not foremost in people's minds when using social media, which it could be argued, negatively influences the uses and gratifications derived from social media if limited information is shared. This hinders the benefits to those seeking information. Linked to this, Leiner et al. (2018, p.196) refer to 'contributiveness' in relation to the extent that 'users share information and thoughts' highlighting that when 'someone uses contribution features more intensively, *relative* to the intensity of using of consumption features, then they will rate higher on the contributiveness scale'. Despite their contention that contributiveness is a measure of how an individual uses Facebook, and is not necessarily a good or bad thing, it could be argued that for those seeking information on social media, it would be more beneficial if more users have a higher rate of contributiveness as this would satisfy their needs and goals. A low rate of contributiveness would echo the findings of Whiting and Williams (2013) where there was a significantly higher proportion of users seeking information relative to those sharing it. For the expatriate teacher considering a move to AD, a higher rate of contributiveness by those who

are currently, or have been employed in schools in the emirate, would quite possibly be a contributory factor to a higher degree of gratifications obtained while using social media.

### 2.5.2 A conceptual model of U&G in social media

Using the four distinct categories of gratifications obtained as indicated by Cutler and Danowski (1980), Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004), and Gan (2018); to group the 10 uses and gratification themes identified by Whiting and Williams (2013) (see **APPENDIX B**), may prove useful in distinguishing between the gratifications sought and the gratifications obtained by social media users. A conceptual model is thus proposed in Figure 2.2 which draws attention to the needs and motives identified by social media users in Whiting and Williams' (2013) research and the possible gratifications they would obtain if these needs were met. While Quinn (2016) contend that social media is largely used for social gratifications because of its facilitation of interaction and communication, the conceptual model proposed in Figure 2.2 also includes gratifications in terms of affection, process and content. It could be argued that the features afforded by social media extend beyond social gratifications and consequently, that content, affection and process gratifications are just as critical to the use of social media. Indeed, Quinn (2016) surmises from a review of existing literature that the maintenance of relationships is evident in some social media contexts but not all. This highlights the complexity of social media in that while it is valuable in the development and maintenance of relationships between users (Quinn, 2016), its uses and gratifications extend beyond social applications.



**Figure 2.2** A conceptual model of uses and gratifications in social media

## 2.6 Teacher recruitment and retention

Given that location has a significant influence on teachers applying for jobs overseas (Chandler, 2010), with the unique context of AD public schools, which recruit expatriate teachers from the available pool of international teachers, it is worth examining existing literature on teacher recruitment. Undeniably, Buckner's (2017) findings that in AD, female teachers in the public sector had low levels of satisfaction compared to females in private schools and male teachers in public schools, underscores the critical nature of the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers to public schools in the emirate. Further to this, and given Guarino, Santibanez and Daley's (2006) findings in their extensive review that there were higher attrition rates among women compared to men, the probable difficulty of retaining female teachers in AD public schools, and consequently the challenges of recruiting female teachers to replace those who leave is worthy of consideration.

The challenge of recruiting teachers (Chevalier, Dolton and McIntosh, 2007) is not limited to national but also international contexts. In England, the House of Commons Education Committee highlights the ongoing problem of recruiting teachers in England over the last five years with the government failing to meet its own targets (HoC Education Committee, 2017). In sub-saharan Africa, Cobbold (2015, p.72) highlights that educators in Ghana 'have learned that increasing teacher supply is a necessary, but not sufficient condition' for meeting the workforce needs of schools. He adds that 'teacher shortages are less a function of how many teachers are produced than of how many are lost each year through turnover and early attrition' (p.72). The emphasis, he concludes, should be on retention, which it could be argued, may contribute to resolving teacher shortages.

Extensive research has been conducted to understand the reasons teachers remain or indeed leave teaching. The length of time a teacher stays in the profession, teacher longevity, influences both the climate of a school as well as how resources are distributed (Ryan et al., 2017) to meet the needs of students. It could be argued that teacher longevity also has an impact on how the profession is viewed by those considering entering the profession as well as those already in teaching due to perceptions derived from turnover and attrition rates. The retention of teachers is therefore critical to policy makers in a climate of high attrition due to challenges associated with working in schools. Several contributory factors to retention have emerged from the reviewed literature across different countries, and within countries, across different contexts (e.g. See et al., 2020). The contention by Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012) provides a good starting point when examining the factors that influence teacher retention as much of the research has focused on the personal characteristics of teachers while other research has explored contextual factors that contribute either positively or negatively to teacher retention:

The relationships between the teachers' personal characteristics and the characteristics within the school context and how they interact seem to provide the most information regarding why a teacher intends to remain or to leave the profession. (p.86)

### *2.6.1 Recruitment at the expense of retention*

In order to address teacher shortages in England, and similar to other countries, the HoC Education Committee (2017) highlights government focus on the recruitment of teachers and less on the retention of those already in schools, suggesting a significant and arguably, costly oversight in policy that needs addressing. This is despite the fact that the retention of teachers has been the subject of much discussion in the last twenty years with research focusing on teacher attrition, particularly for those new to the profession, and the factors that encourage teachers to remain in education. Given that 'in the year teachers exit the profession, they are less effective, on average, at raising student achievement than those teachers who persist longer' (Henry, Bastian and Fortner, 2011, p.279), it appears that the retention of teachers is critical to raising student achievement, while conversely, teacher attrition is detrimental to student achievement. In their research, Henry, Bastian and Fortner (2011) found that on average, teachers were less effective if they left after one year, than those who continued into their second year of teaching, who, in fact, were found to significantly increase their effectiveness in that additional year. Furthermore, the effectiveness of those who remained in teaching for at least five years flattened after 3 years of teaching although they still remained more effective than those who left after their third or fourth year of teaching. These findings suggest that once teachers decide to leave the profession, their commitment and determination to succeed wanes, thus emphasising the importance of retaining teachers to at least maintain, or better still, increase effectiveness. Whilst a significant amount of the literature focuses on the reasons teachers leave the profession (Kokka, 2016), the next section will focus on the factors influencing retention.



### *2.6.2 Factors influencing teacher retention*

Despite some research indicating that retention rates are lower in schools with low socio-economic advantage (Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; cited by Guarino, Santibanez and Daley, 2006;), Hughes (2012, p.253) found in her research that teachers were 'more likely to remain in the most impoverished schools' and furthermore, that factors such as school facilities and resources had no bearing on teacher retention. This finding is similar to that of Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012, p.84) who highlight that teachers in schools 'with a high student population that received free and reduced lunch had teachers with lower intentions of leaving the profession'. This is a positive finding for both schools in disadvantaged locations and those with limited resources as the prevailing rhetoric has suggested that these two factors have a negative influence on teacher retention.

Other research, has found that salary influences teachers' determination to remain in the profession until retirement (Hughes, 2012) which suggests that financial gain has a greater impact on retention than the surrounding economic circumstances. Moreover, in the same study, the cooperation and participation of both students and parents had a significant influence on teacher retention as did the perceptions of teachers on their effectiveness. It will be interesting to note in this study, the influence of social media on teacher retention in the AD public school context where expatriate teachers have limited direct interaction with parents due to language barriers and are therefore heavily reliant on Arabic-speaking colleagues to garner the support of parents and in some cases, students themselves.

The OECD (2005, p.7) stresses the importance of 'support and incentives for professional development and ongoing performance at high levels' in policies that focus on employing and retaining effective teachers. The importance of professional development, mentoring and effective school leadership in the retention of teachers (e.g. Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018) is worth highlighting. In addition, Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012) and Ingersoll and Collins (2017) emphasise that teachers' ability to influence decisions made within schools as well as autonomy in terms of curricula and the classroom could increase retention. This suggests that teachers require high levels of independence and control to feel that they have some influence over what happens both within and outside their classrooms, given the high level of education that teachers are now required to possess.

Good relationships between teachers that provide reassurance and help solve problems (Cockburn, 1996) together with social support between colleagues, and from supervisors are important in mitigating stress in the workplace (Argyle, 1987; cited by Cockburn, 2000). Cockburn (1996) adds a counter argument to this however, stating that co-workers and supervisors can also be the cause of stress in schools. Indeed, Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) found in their research that limited support from the senior leadership team and poor relationships with colleagues contributed to teachers' determination to leave the profession or at least the school that they are employed in. The issue of support will be revisited later in this chapter. Whether teachers leave one school to secure employment in another, or leave the profession all together, the impact on student learning and the school environment is negative (Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill, 2012), particularly if they are highly effective and experienced in subjects that struggle to recruit and retain teachers.

Faremi (2017) emphasises the importance of job security in retaining teachers adding within this, opportunities for promotion, working conditions and career progression prospects. She contends that lack of job security leads to lower commitment levels and limited effort or desire to meet the objectives and goals of an organisation. Along with this, other practical considerations for remaining in teaching such as the contact time associated with teaching, and school holidays which enable parents to look after their children have also been attributed to supporting retention (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). These views suggest that if these factors are not prevalent in teaching, retention rates will be lower, particularly for those with young children as they would need to make alternative

childcare arrangements during school holidays. It could be argued that this would be more relevant to female teachers as they tend to be the primary carers of young children. In fact, Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012) found in their research that female teachers were more likely to remain in the profession than their male counterparts. This counters Guarino, Santibanez and Daley's (2006) findings of higher attrition rates among women compared to men, highlighting the complexity of teacher retention and the importance of context.

On a final note, Cockburn (2000, p.234) indicates that enjoyment and fulfilment are also derived from the challenges that teachers experience in their work although she acknowledges 'that teaching today does, by its very nature, provides challenges for teachers'. She does however highlight that the limited career progression opportunities afforded to teachers, namely promotion to deputy and then principal, may be insufficiently challenging for those teachers with greater career aspirations.

### *2.6.3 Challenges in retaining expatriate teachers*

For expatriates employed in AD, the challenges posed by teaching a different curriculum in a different cultural context, to students whose first language is not English, poses further challenges in an already demanding profession. In addition, and as found in research by Rass (2012, p.155), 'the challenges caused by cultural differences and mismatches of expectations' between expatriate teachers and local parents adds to the stresses of teaching in a foreign context. Furthermore, job security causes significant concern among expatriate teachers as contracts lengths are either 2 or 3 years after which they are subject to annual renewal at the discretion of the education authority. The tension and uncertainty for those who want to remain in AD but have reached the end of their contracts is noteworthy as renewal is not guaranteed. For many in this situation, the uncertainty leads to teachers leaving before or after 2 or 3 years which, it could be argued, leads to reduced effectiveness in the last year of teaching as expatriate teachers have already started looking for new employment opportunities elsewhere. The influence therefore of social media on the retention of expatriate teachers in AD, in an environment of limited job security is certainly worthy of examination. Moreover, factors such as limited meaningful dialogue with non-English speaking colleagues and parents as well as limited career progression pose further challenges to expatriate teachers in this context. The difficulty of recruiting, let alone retaining teachers in such challenging circumstances is worth highlighting. This research will therefore aim to explore whether the use of social media offers the support that expatriate teachers need to remain employed in AD, or whether it actually contributes to teachers' determination to leave due to the nature of conversations that occur in this online environment.

## **2.7 Social media in recruitment and retention**

The use of social media by both individuals and organisations has increased significantly over the last few years (Collmus, Armstrong and Landers, 2016; Weidner, O'Brien and Wynne, 2016). Globally, educational institutions have capitalised on the facilities afforded by social media platforms to enable students greater access to teachers and learning resources, increase awareness of their successes and advertise employment opportunities for administrative and teaching staff. Interestingly, Sheldon (2015, p.82) citing the 2013 Social Admissions Report, highlights that '75 percent of students who graduated from high school in 2013 used social media as a resource when deciding where to enrol'. She adds that students were keen to engage with new and existing students as well as those responsible for admissions. This suggests that the views of those already in the system influences the decisions made by prospective students more so than advertising campaigns run by universities. It could be argued therefore that the same trend would be evident with teachers seeking employment in schools outside their home country as the views of those already employed and those recently recruited would provide a more realistic impression of working abroad. Due to the upheaval a move to a foreign country entails, the views shared on social media by those who have already made the move is invaluable to expatriate

teachers seeking employment in AD. Therefore, while schools may use social media to advertise new positions and share information about their school and employment benefits, for the expatriate teacher who needs to consider the implications of a move to a foreign country, with possibly a different cultural, social and educational landscape, the views of those already in post are critical to determining whether to apply and indeed, accept an employment offer.

Given the potential influence of social media on expatriate teachers' decisions to seek and secure employment outside their home country, it stands to reason that these same teachers would continue to use social media once expatriated, bearing in mind that social media can be used 'to share and exchange ideas' (Sheldon, 2015, p.83). The challenges of delivering a new curriculum, in a different educational and cultural setting, may affect not only the recruitment of expatriate teachers, but once employed, their retention. A closer examination of how social media is currently used in the recruitment and retention of staff in different sectors will now be undertaken.

### *2.7.1 Employer and employee use of social media*

The use of social media for recruitment, is not limited to the advertisement of jobs with the accompanying company profiles, but according to the reviewed literature, encompasses the selection and screening of prospective employees as well as the identification of both internal and external candidates for promotion (Collmus, Armstrong and Landers, 2016). The use of SNSs such as LinkedIn to review the profiles of potential employees by employers has increased (SHRM, 2013; cited by Davison et al., 2016) suggesting that in addition to details of employment history and experience often provided in curriculum vitae and application forms, the endorsements, skills and special areas of interest included in user profiles on LinkedIn gives employers a detailed overview of a prospective employee's suitability for the advertised role. While data exists regarding the number of companies that use social media to screen prospective employees, a process referred to as cybervetting (Mikkelsen, 2010; cited by Berger and Zickar, 2016), by examining their online profiles to determine suitability for specific roles (Davison et al., 2016), there is some evidence in the reviewed literature of how employees use social media to secure employment. Collmus, Armstrong and Landers (2016) highlight that those seeking employment increasingly use social media to find out information about organisations and potential employment opportunities as well as to tap into existing networks for potential openings. In a similar vein, Ladkin and Buhalis (2016) state that:

employees can build their profiles on SNSs, search for information on a company to see organisational structures and cultures and exchange information not only with employers but also potentially with existing employees. This is significant, as employees can find "informal" information through comments from existing employees rather than the "formal" information that companies provide. (p.328)

Moreover, SNSs enable individuals seeking employment to highlight their skills and capabilities at a very low cost (Ladkin and Buhalis, 2016) considering the global reach of social media. For the expatriate teacher, this presents a significant benefit. Citing data from Jobvite (2015), Collmus, Armstrong and Landers (2016) point out that out of those seeking employment opportunities, Facebook was used by 67% of users, while LinkedIn was used by 40% of users. Although referring to employers trying to recruit potential employees as opposed to employees trying to secure employment, Lewis, Thomas and James (2015) citing earlier data from JobVite (2012) highlight Facebook and LinkedIn usage at 66% and 97% respectively. Despite the fact that LinkedIn is a professional SNS, it appears from this data that individuals prefer to use Facebook to find employment opportunities while employers prefer to use LinkedIn which could be due to the endorsement facility on LinkedIn which gives credibility to the skills and capabilities of potential employees. Therefore, not only

are companies 'cybervetting' potential employees, but individuals, are to a certain extent, 'cybervetting' prospective employers.

The differences in purpose and demographic of SNSs, and therefore, the difference in information provided by prospective employees is worthy of consideration for employers with Davison et al. (2016) highlighting that Facebook may be more suitable for establishing personality traits while LinkedIn may be more appropriate for assessing work experience and problem-solving skills. It could be argued that conversely, prospective employees could use comments and organisational postings of events on LinkedIn and Facebook to assess whether the values represented by the company reflect their own and therefore whether they would like to accept an employment offer. For the expatriate teacher seeking employment overseas, the presence of a school on social media with the accompanying comments and updates on school events could prove valuable to determine whether the school mission, vision and ethos reflect those of an organisation that they would want to be employed by.

### *2.7.2 Warranting value on social media*

The ability of social media to enable users to validate and endorse the skills and capabilities of other users on their profiles, 'warranting value' (Hayes and Carr, 2015; cited by Carr, 2016) is worth highlighting bearing in mind that information used for selection on SNSs may be inaccurate or false (Ladkin and Buhalis, 2016). Indeed, SNSs such as LinkedIn give users the opportunity to highlight their professional areas of strength, which are then given higher warranting value if what is posted online matches the characteristics of the user offline. The posting of skills and capabilities on a SNSs such as LinkedIn improves the warranting value of these skills as employers and work colleagues can support or dispute the claims made (Carr, 2016). The positive acknowledgement and verification of skills or online content by colleagues can be viewed as meeting the esteem needs, as indicated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, of those using social media. For the expatriate teacher, the reputation of a user and their content (Kietzmann et al., 2011) based on their warranting value, is critical in determining whether the information posted on the details of overseas employment opportunities are valid and reliable and thus appropriate to determine whether to pursue and indeed accept opportunities to teach abroad.

### *2.7.3 Social media use in the workplace*

Bearing in mind that in their review of research and the subsequent literature, Weidner, O'Brien and Wynne (2016) found both positive and negative implications of the use of social media on employee attitude and performance in the workplace, it will be interesting to assess whether this study will reflect similar findings. For example, Weidner, O'Brien and Wynne (2016) highlight an increase in research which indicates the advantages of social media in the work environment including attitude and performance at work as well as improvements in how an organisation is perceived. Conversely, they point out that the use of SNSs has also been found to have an unfavourable effect on attitude and performance at work, therefore highlighting the paradoxical effects of social media, and in particular SNSs, on employees in the workplace. It will be interesting to examine whether this inconsistency in the influence of social media is mirrored in this study.

## **2.8 Social media as a mechanism for support**

Given that one of the main reasons for teacher attrition in the first few years of teaching is lack of support (Ibrahim, 2012), the importance of support as a mechanism to improve teacher retention is worthy of consideration. In this context, and as emphasised by Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010), expatriate teachers, who, as inter-SIEs, will require information about the differences in expectations in their new role, and consequently, support in making the necessary adjustments to manage these expectations. The assertion by Dickson et al. (2014) highlights the critical nature of support for new teachers:

There is much evidence in the literature that gaining support from colleagues, feeling socially comfortable and having both personal and professional support from colleagues is critical in the first years of a teacher's journey, as well as for teacher retention. (p.7)

Concurring with this stance, research by Santibanez and Daley (2006), Gaikhorst et al. (2014), Guarino, Chabaan and Du (2017) and See et al. (2020) points to the importance of support for new teachers from co-workers, coordinators and administrators, with Cockburn (1996) further highlighting the value of good relationships in providing support to mitigate stress in schools. For expatriate teachers in a new educational and social context, support, or lack of it, can have significant bearing on their determination to remain employed in AD.

### *2.8.1 Support in new settings*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a study by Mercieca and Kelly (2018) explored how teachers in Australia used private groups on social media for support early in their career. They found that ECTs used Facebook to gain knowledge about employment opportunities. This type of support is referred to as 'informational support' where a user looks for specific information 'to answer a question, solve a problem or make a decision' using SNSs (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016, p.423). Secondly, and pertinent to this study, Mercieca and Kelly's (2018, p.8) research revealed that for teachers travelling to new settings, 'the Facebook group provided a stable form of support establishing a fixed point of connection whilst the early career teacher was away from family'. This is referred to as 'network management' where established social ties are maintained through SNSs (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016, p.424). While expatriate teachers in AD are not necessarily ECTs, the challenges they face are not dissimilar to those of ECTs as they are working away from home and their established support networks, in unfamiliar cultural and educational contexts, delivering a different curriculum to students whose first language is not English. In many ways, and as highlighted in Chaaban and Du's (2017) research, expatriate teachers may well feel like ECTs due to these challenges. Therefore, the support provided by both their existing and new social media groups may mollify some of the apprehensions they face when initially securing employment in AD and the inevitable anxieties they will experience once employed in an unfamiliar context. The 'collegiality and trust' in the way teachers support each other as observed by Mercieca and Kelly (2018, p.8) in their study, is necessary in this context given the challenges faced by expatriate teachers. Indeed, the importance of feeling a sense of camaraderie (Hur and Brush, 2009) and echoed by Cockburn (1996), where experiences can be shared and where teachers realise that they are not alone in these experiences is noteworthy. Arguably, camaraderie may not always result in positive interactions or positive feelings among those involved. Mercieca and Kelly's (2018) results about how ECTs in Australia found out about teaching opportunities in other cities are not dissimilar to those of expatriate teachers in AD who anecdotally refer to hearing about working in AD through Facebook. A further benefit highlighted in their research, which would also be beneficial to expatriate teachers is the information provided on Facebook groups in terms of meeting the requirements for teaching in particular contexts. It will be interesting to note whether Mercieca and Kelly's (2018) findings that ECTs were able to share resources and experiences thereby reducing the isolation that teachers often experience in new settings, will be mirrored in this study.

### *2.8.2 Support in online communities*

Hur and Brush (2009) draw attention to several reasons why teachers participate in online communities. An online community is made up of a number of people who use shared conventions to frequently interact with each other virtually (Chandler and Munday, 2016). Hur and Brush's (2009) research indicated that teachers took an active role in online communities to overcome either geographical isolation or the feeling of loneliness within a school when teachers are too busy to interact with other colleagues due to work demands. Both these factors can affect expatriate teachers in AD working away from home and

possibly isolated within schools due to heavy teaching loads and language barriers which may hinder interactions with Arabic-speaking colleagues. Further to this, and concurring with Mercieca and Kelly (2018), they highlight that online communities enable teachers to explore new ideas that they can apply to their specific situation or to reflect on their own experiences. It could be argued that the supports highlighted in their research may not only increase retention, but also improve the experience of expatriate teachers in AD. Moreover, the anonymity afforded by Facebook allows ECTs to share their experiences with teachers outside the school without feeling that their competency would be judged (Hur and Brush, 2009; Mercieca and Kelly, 2018). This 'fear of being judged as incompetent' by colleagues 'is a very real obstacle' in seeking help (Cockburn, 1996, p.76). Therefore, 'emotional support' where 'care, empathy, understanding, trust, respect' are expressed through SNSs (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016, p.424) is beneficial to teachers in new or challenging situations. The fact that teachers participate in online communities to share emotions, both positive and negative about their teaching experiences and receive suggestions from other teachers on how to resolve their problems (Hur and Brush, 2009) highlights the value of these online communities and arguably, their positive influence on retention

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter has examined extant literature and research on how expatriate teachers, social media and social media literacy are defined. Based on the reviewed literature, a conceptual model has been proposed that attempts to clarify how social media concepts are linked. U&G provides a useful theoretical framework to examine how social media meets these needs while Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been used to further clarify the needs that are pertinent to expatriate teachers. A conceptual model has been proposed to demonstrate the relationship between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. Finally, consideration has been given to existing research on how social media is used in recruitment and retention and by teachers as a mechanism for support.

## CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In order to establish the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD, this chapter considered four key areas, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. This chapter provides details of how the research was conducted, more specifically, how the data was collected and analysed, the sample that was used and crucially, the ethical considerations adhered to during the research. Finally, consideration is given to maintaining quality, objectivity and integrity.

### 3.2 Theoretical position

Before examining the methodological approach to this study, it is worth clarifying the theoretical position that was taken during the research. Ontology refers to the 'nature of reality' (Merriam, 2009, p.8) or in other words, the 'nature or form of the social world' (Waring, 2017, p.16), while epistemology refers to the 'nature of knowledge' (Merriam, 2009, p.8) with the key question being 'how can we be sure?' (Newby, 2014, p.36) or in other words 'how can what is assumed to exist be known?' (Waring, 2017, p.16). In summary, ontology and epistemology relate to how our view of the world influences what questions we pose and the evidence we accept to aid our understanding of the world (Newby, 2014). The position taken in this study is that of 'ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories and constructions)' (Maxwell, 2012, p.5) and epistemological relativism:

our categories, frameworks of thinking, modes of analysis, ways of seeing things, habits of thought, dispositions of every kind, motivating concerns, interests, values, and so forth, are affected by our life paths and socio-cultural situations, and thereby make a difference in how we can and do "see" or know or approach things. (Lawson, 2003, p.162)

This ontological and epistemological standpoint, is the basis of critical realism (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011; Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013).

#### 3.2.1 Critical Realism

Critical realism rejects 'judgemental relativism' which views 'all representations of the world as 'equally good' (Fairclough, 2005 p.922). Instead, critical realism espouses foundational relativism which states 'that while claims to absolute truth are untenable, this does not rule out the possibility of demarcating between 'good' and 'not so good' theories.' (Balarin, 2008; cited by Young and Muller, 2008, p.520) and our ability to make these judgements based on criteria to demarcate knowledge (Lakatos et al., 1999; cited by Balarin, 2008). Moreover, our knowledge is based on what our best theories tell us which will change as theories compete.

##### 3.2.1.1 Comparison between critical realism, positivism and interpretivism

With its deep-seated emphasis on ontology, critical realism posits the existence of a world independent of our views and perceptions and thus acknowledges that we can get things wrong since our knowledge is fallible (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2010). Critical realists' views differ to those of positivists who contend 'that the scientist's conceptualization of reality actually directly reflects that reality' (Bryman, 2016, p.25), and interpretivists who assert that 'reality, as well as our knowledge thereof, are social products and hence incapable of being understood independent of the social actors (including the researchers) that construct and make sense of that reality' (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p.14). Instead, critical realism is frequently viewed as a middle ground between positivism and interpretivism (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). Critical realists contend that while perceptions on reality may differ, these perspectives are perfectly valid (Maxwell,

2012). In addition, it is accepted that the absolute truth cannot be directly accessed and therefore knowledge is temporary (Edgley et al., 2016). Critical realism proposes that part of the real world is made up of mental conditions and characteristics which cannot be directly observed (Edgley et al., 2016) which differs distinctly to positivism where theoretical terms can only be considered scientific if they are receptive to observation (Bryman, 2016). In critical realism, the world is perceived as being laden with theory but not determined by theory (Fletcher, 2017). The relevance of these theories, particularly to this study, will be returned to later in this chapter.

### 3.2.1.2 Levels of reality

In critical realism, reality is seen 'as an open and complex system where other mechanisms and conditions also exist' (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013, p.857). In an open system, the future cannot be predicted, in other words, an action will not always result in the same outcome (Edgley et al., 2016). With this in mind, critical realism postulates that there are three levels of reality; the empirical, the actual and the real (Volkoff and Strong, 2013; Edgley et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2017). Despite this one reality, the three levels within this reality are useful in helping us understand that as researchers, we do not necessarily have direct access to this reality, nor are we able to discern and perceive every facet of it (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). The empirical level is concerned with what is observed (Edgley et al., 2016) which can be assessed empirically although this is subject to 'human experience and interpretation' (Fletcher, 2017, p.183). At the actual level, events happen whether or not they are observed (Fletcher, 2017). According to Fletcher (2017, p.183), at the real level, 'causal mechanisms' or 'causal structures' are present. She explains that these causal mechanisms 'are the inherent properties in an object or structure that act as causal forces to produce events' (Fletcher, 2017, p.183). The principal goal of critical realism is therefore to understand the effects of these causal mechanisms on events in the social world through these three levels of reality (Fletcher, 2017). As reality is viewed as an open and complex system, critical realists accept that different results can be generated by the same causal powers (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2010; Edgley et al., 2016). Consideration of context is essential as it illuminates the conditions that foster or hinder the action of the causal mechanism (Bryman, 2016). Consequently, a description of the context of this study is provided in Chapter 1 as this has significant bearing on the findings of the inquiry.

### 3.2.1.3 Dimensions of knowledge

Critical realists hold that there are two dimensions of knowledge; 'transitive' and 'intransitive' (Edgley et al., 2016). They distinguish between the two domains of knowledge by stating that:

The intransitive dimension refers to the physical and social world that we inhabit. The transitive dimension is the theories and discourses we hold to understand our world. So when we change our theories about the world, the world itself does not change but our understanding of it does. (Edgley et al., 2016, p.320)

Therefore, the fallibility of knowledge is not consistent, with some researchers holding more precise and convincing accounts or theories to explain the intransitive dimension than others (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). U&G as described in Chapter 2, can therefore be viewed as the transitive dimension of knowledge which can be used to examine the influence of social media on expatriate teachers in the intransitive dimension, the physical and social world that they inhabit. An examination of how this approach will be considered in relation to critical realism will now be undertaken.



#### 3.2.1.4 Generative mechanisms

This research aimed to describe, understand and find meaning in the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers for whom the context they come from and the context they find themselves in results in multiple experiences in terms of the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. As previously mentioned, and highlighted by Bryman (2016), consideration of the context is essential as it illuminates the conditions that foster or hinder the action of the causal mechanism. Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013) citing Lawson (1997, p.21), explain that:

A mechanism is basically the way of acting or working of a structured thing ... Structured things [physical objects and processes] possess causal [or emergent] powers which, when triggered or released, act as generative mechanisms to determine the actual phenomena of the world. (p.857)

Generative mechanisms are defined as 'the entities and processes that are constitutive of the phenomenon of interest' (Bryman, 2016, p.25). While they are not openly discernible, they are included in theoretical evidence as their effects can be observed (Bryman, 2016). The affordances offered by social media, could, if guidance is taken from Volkoff and Strong (2013, p.822), be considered 'a subset of the more general set of generative mechanisms'. Therefore, U&G, which focuses on users, their needs, motives and goals, together with the affordances offered by social media, is suited to the critical realist view which places emphasis on the influence of causal mechanisms on events in the social world.

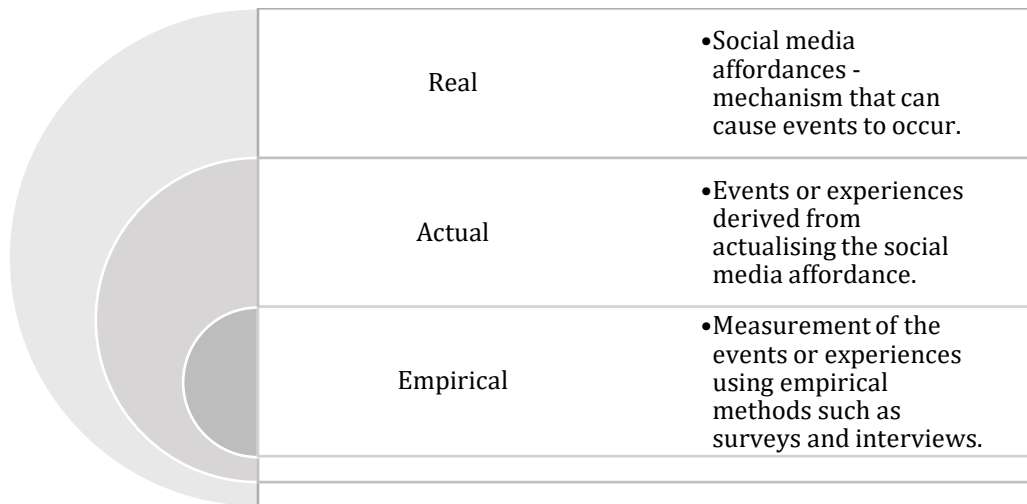
#### 3.2.2 Theoretical position in relation to theoretical framework

Given that in U&G, individuals may derive different gratifications from using the same social media platforms based on a range of social phenomena, critical realism where 'the same causal powers can produce different outcomes' (Edgley et al., 2016, p.321), is valuable as it places emphasis on understanding different perspectives and expressing varied assertions (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Thus, advancing the views of Edgley et al. (2016), the gratifications obtained by expatriate teachers may actually be due to another mechanism that may not have been considered. Therefore, critical realism facilitates the expression of these varied experiences and perspectives.

A key consideration in U&G is the affordances offered by social media. Affordances are defined by Volkoff and Strong (2013) as:

*the potential for behaviors associated with achieving an immediate concrete outcome and arising from the relation between an object (e.g., an IT artefact) and a goal-oriented actor or actors. (p.823 italicised emphasis in original)*

They explain that an affordance exists whether or not it is perceived or used. Therefore, for critical realists, an affordance which exists at the real dimension can be viewed as a mechanism that can cause events to occur. A conceptual model is proposed in Figure 3.1 to illustrate the relationship between these three levels of reality and U&G. In order for the affordance to be brought into the actual dimension, a user must not only have the necessary skills but also the need and motive that is met by realising the affordance (Stoffregen, 2003; cited by Volkoff and Strong, 2013). Put simply, for the affordance to be realised at the actual level, the perception must be that the gratifications sought will be obtained through the perceived affordance. The expectations or experiences derived from actualising the affordance can thus be measured at the empirical level through observations or other methods such as interviews (Volkoff and Strong, 2013), surveys and focus groups.



**Figure 3.1** A conceptual model of relationship between critical realism and U&G

### 3.2.3 Methodology and its compatibility with critical realism

Given that critical realism ‘accepts the existence of different types of objects of knowledge - physical, social, and conceptual - which have different ontological and epistemological characteristics’ which ‘therefore require a range of different research methods and methodologies to access them’ (Mingers, Mutch and Wilcocks, 2013, p.795), the appropriateness of mixed methods research in this study is worth highlighting. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, mixed methods (Bryman, 2016), was used. In this research, the choice of methodology was based ‘on the capability and complementarity of different methods to convey different kinds of knowledge about generative mechanisms’ (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013, p.864) which related to the influence of the affordances in social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD. Methods, according to Grant and Giddings (2002, p.12) ‘are the practical means, the tools, for collecting and analysing data.’ while methodology relates to the approaches used in the collection and analysis of data which are usually associated ‘methods that are commonly used together’ (Newby, 2014, p.664). Critical realism ‘can offer mixed methods a perspective that emphasizes diversity and the relationships among people, events and ideas.’ (Shannon-Baker, 2016, p.330) Consequently, the relationships developed as a result of using social media by expatriate teachers from diverse backgrounds, with different perspectives and experiences were considered using mixed methods research. Thus, under critical realism, the quantitative method of data collection provided a data pattern while the qualitative method was used to explain it by identifying the generative mechanisms. Therefore, from a critical realist perspective, mixed methodology is valuable for research that assesses the value offered by the phenomenon in question (Shannon-Baker, 2016), social media, and its influence on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention.

## 3.3 Mixed methods design

Before justifying the reasons for using mixed methods design in this study, it is worth clarifying what this is. According to Newby (2014, p.665), mixed methods design is a ‘research design that incorporates quantitative and qualitative approaches either in parallel or sequentially.’ Details of this will be returned to later in this chapter.

### 3.3.1 Justification for mixed methods design

Mixed methods design was used for several reasons. Firstly, mixing methods enabled the researcher to build on, question, and verify the findings raised in the first method of data collection (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). As critical realism emphasises the significance of different perspectives, due to its ‘belief that theories on reality are partial’,

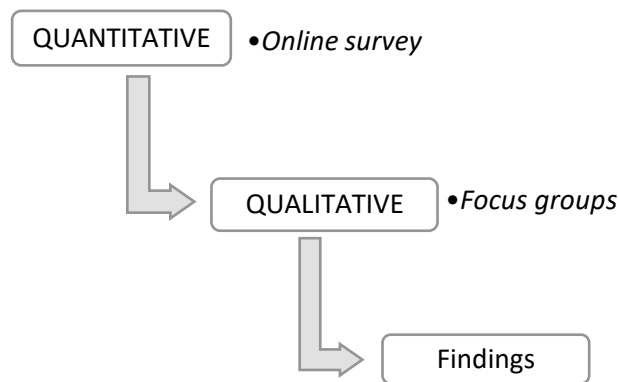
the differences between qualitative and quantitative research are narrowed (Shannon-Baker, 2016, p.331) as the researcher is able to capitalise on the benefits offered by each method to explain the effects of the phenomenon in question. Explanation, what causes events to occur, is a key focus of critical realism (Easton, 2010). Pointing to the complementarity of these two methods, Castleberry and Nolen (2018, p.807) state that whereas 'quantitative research tends to focus on the frequency, intensity, or duration of a behaviour, qualitative research methods allow us to explore the beliefs, values, and motives that explain why the behaviours occur'. Finally, mixing methods provided differing views of the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in public schools in AD, which according to Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013), from a critical realist perspective, the world which is multi-layered with different levels of abstraction, therefore requires different methods to understand its complexity. Moreover, as a critical realist researcher, it is acknowledged that 'complete objectivity is not possible' (Shannon-Baker, 2016, p.324) and therefore there is an appreciation of the value of mixed methodology in fulfilling 'different yet complementary purposes within mixed-method designs' (Kelle, 2006, p.309).

### *3.3.2 Justification of the data collection methods*

In order to understand the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD public schools, online surveys and focus groups were used. According to Morgan (1996), there are three distinctions between surveys and focus groups, which justify the use of both these methods in this study. Firstly, surveys with closed questions constrain participants' responses compared to revelations made in focus groups. Therefore, while surveys provide a general overview of participants' perspectives, focus groups facilitate more in-depth discussions. Secondly, focus groups allow for more open-ended responses while surveys restrict participant responses although clear responses to specific questions using yes/no options are provided. In addition, surveys offer a wider coverage of topics while focus groups provide more detail in what is discussed. It could be argued that a further difference is that the researcher has a greater influence on the outcomes of focus groups compared to surveys as they can guide discussions and focus participants on key areas of interest, although Morgan (1996) contends that this can disrupt the exchanges between participants which defeats the key justification for employing focus groups. While surveys do not facilitate interactions between respondents, focus groups enable participants to question each other as well as clarify their views to other participants (Morgan, 1996) which can result in what Wilson (1997, p.214-15) citing Kitzinger (1994) refers to as 'collective remembering' where participants are able to develop a 'complete picture' based on each other's 'collective remembering of events' which may not be constructed by researchers. It is these differences, and the benefits offered by each method, that influenced the decision to use a combination of surveys and focus groups in this research. The data collection processes used in this study will now be described.

## **3.4 Data collection process**

In this study, a sequential approach to mixed methods research was used (Cameron, 2009). With this approach, 'One type of data provides a basis for collection of another type of data.' (Mertens, 2005, p.292; cited by Cameron, 2009, p.144). In other words, qualitative research was preceded by quantitative research which provided an indication of what questions needed further clarification in the second phase of data collection. Specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed method design was used, or as explained by Bryman (2016) citing Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the quantitative method was elaborated by the qualitative method with both methods of data collection holding equal weighting. The quantitative method was key to guiding the questions that needed to be explained and explored further during the qualitative phase. For clarity, Figure 3.2 provides an illustration of both the sequence and the weighting of each method.



*Adapted from Bryman (2016) citing Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).*

**Figure 3.2** Explanatory sequential mixed method design

Both methods of data collection are shown in upper case to highlight that the online survey and the focus groups are of equal weighting with the focus group data expanding and clarifying the findings from the online surveys. Given that critical realism focuses on explanation, the use of explanatory sequential mixed method design proved invaluable in this study.

#### *3.4.1 Piloting the survey and the focus group interview*

Prior to conducting online surveys and focus group interviews, a pilot of both data collection methods was conducted to assess, according to Bryman (2016), the functionality of both instruments. Moreover, the survey and focus group interviews were piloted to assess the effectiveness of the questions in answering the research questions identified in the first chapter. Taking guidance from Bryman (2016) and Newby (2014), the two pilots provided an opportunity to review whether the order of the questions needed amendment, how adequate the instructions were in enabling respondents to answer questions correctly and how appropriate the wording of the questions was in minimising confusion. Three people who were not in the sample were asked to complete the survey online and provide feedback on changes they assessed were needed to improve the quality of the survey. Changes were made to the survey questions, layout, order and instructions based on the feedback provided by the pilot study participants. For example, the definition of social media was included in the questionnaire to ensure respondents shared a common understanding. The focus group interview was piloted with one person who is an expatriate practitioner working in AD. She recommended allocating time to each section of the focus group interviews and made suggestions on how to improve the questions to ensure there was clarity. As a result of this feedback, a schedule was created for the focus groups (see **Appendix C**).

#### *3.4.2 Online surveys*

The initial phase of data collection was carried out using online surveys, which are also referred to as web surveys (Harlow, 2010). Taking guidance from Bryman (2016), the survey consisted mainly of closed questions which included, multiple choice, Likert scale, rank order questions and forced-choice format questions (see **APPENDIX D**). Closed questions were used due to several benefits highlighted by Newby (2014). Closed questions facilitated greater breadth and scope in terms of the questions that respondents were required to answer. While it is acknowledged that open questions give respondents more opportunity to express their views in their own words, closed questions made it easier and quicker for respondents to participate due to pre-determined options being provided (Newby, 2014). To facilitate the expression of personal views and enable participants to voice their unique experiences and perspectives, open questions were used in the second

phase of data collection. The questions in the online survey asked respondents for demographic information as well as information about their beliefs and attitudes regarding social media as advanced by Bryman (2016). Participants were emailed a link which directed them to the online survey. The online survey was created using Google Forms, a tool used to create online surveys (KSU, 2019), which meant the results, as Bryman (2016) points out, could be automatically recorded into a spreadsheet which minimised the amount of coding required thereby saving time and reducing the possibility of errors that may have otherwise occurred had the data been recorded and processed manually.

### *3.4.3 Focus groups*

Focus groups were conducted after the online surveys 'to explore the deeper significance of the responses given by members' which 'can be used to determine motives and values' (Newby, 2014, p.289). This supported the understanding of the gratifications sought and obtained by teachers using social media and provided the explanations that are essential in critical realism. Focus group questions were standardised to ensure that comparisons could be made between the data collected from the different groups which Morgan (1996) argues is a strength of focus groups although he also points to the restriction this places on the researcher as they are unable to change the questions as new issues and views emerge during the focus group. To moderate the effect of standardisation, a funnel pattern as indicated by Morgan (1996), was used where a set of core questions were used during the focus group with slight variation in discussions based on interviewees' comments and exchanges.

There were two focus groups, one consisting of 4 mathematics expatriate teachers and the other of 5 science teachers. As inferred by Morgan (1996) a higher level of standardisation minimises the number of focus groups required as there will be limited differences in the themes that are highlighted between each group. The small size of each focus group, according to Morgan (1996) citing Morgan (1992a), facilitated high levels of participation, gave participants more time to share their opinions, and made the management of these discussions easier for the moderator. The groups were mixed according to country of origin and number of years employed in public schools in AD (see **APPENDIX E**). This allowed a wide range of views and experiences to be expressed. Each focus group session lasted no longer than 60 minutes and consisted of 3 sections, namely, a group activity (see **APPENDIX F**), fixed questions (see **APPENDIX G**) and finally variable questions based on emerging themes from the group discussions. Utilising methods employed by Kitzinger (1994), group exercises were used to encourage participation and interaction between members. With permission from the participants, focus group interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim (see **APPENDIX H**).

### *3.4.4 Researcher's role*

Given my position as a partial insider and following guidance from Newby (2014), a concerted effort was made to maintain objectivity and integrity throughout the study. While it is acknowledged that the views of the researcher can influence the choice of research, impartiality in the way evidence is used to draw conclusions (Newby, 2014), was always a key consideration during the inquiry. Thus, this chapter has, as encouraged by Newby (2014) clearly articulated the ontological and epistemological values embraced in this study as well as the theoretical position that influenced the choice of methodology and methods used during the research. Furthermore, ethical issues outlined in this chapter were a major consideration during the data collection phase of the inquiry.

During the online survey phase of data collection, the researcher had minimal influence on the participants' responses once the email with the link to the online survey was sent to participants. In contrast, my role as the moderator was critical to the structure of the focus groups. Adhering to guidelines provided by Morgan (1996), groups were structured according to the questions that were asked with the moderator guiding discussions

according to the data that needed to be collected and based on how members interacted with each other. Encouragement was given to each member to actively participate to limit the dominance of more vocal participants. Discussions were recorded to ensure that I, as the moderator, could focus on guiding and encouraging interaction. This is a more 'interventionist style' which encourages 'debate to continue beyond the stage it might otherwise have ended, challenging people's taken for granted reality and encouraging them to discuss inconsistencies both between participants and within their own thinking.' (Kitzinger, 1994, p.106)

### *3.4.5 Sampling*

It is necessary at this point to indicate who the participants were and how they were selected, more specifically, the sample that was used during the data collection phase of this research. A sample is 'the segment of the population that is selected for investigation' (Bryman, 2016, p.174). In this study, the sample constituted current and former expatriate teachers of public schools in AD. As participants were not selected randomly, non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2016) was used with expatriate teachers who had either worked in the school the researcher was employed in or other educators known to teachers in this school.

Probability sampling involves selecting a sample randomly 'so that each unit in the population has a known chance of being selected' while non-probability sampling refers to selection of a sample that is not based on random selection (Bryman, 2016, p.174). According to Yang and Banamah (2014, p.2), the decrease in response rates in probability sampling surveys offers strong support for using non-probability sampling although they highlight that probability sampling enables the researcher to infer 'from the sample to the population.' While probability sampling would have made the results of this study more generalizable to the expatriate teacher population, it was not selected due to the nature of this context and the teachers that work within it. Relationships are important to teachers who work in the AD expatriate teacher community and therefore, participation in the survey relied heavily on the relationships that the initial participants had established. Receiving the online survey from a researcher unknown to the participants would have reduced participation from expatriate teachers as knowing the individual conducting the survey or a teacher linked to that person is important to expatriate teachers in this context due to the value that is placed on pre-existing relationships.

#### *3.4.5.1 Possible sampling methods*

While quota sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, is useful when 'the size and the characteristics of the population are known but it is not possible to enumerate every person or element in the population', and when a researcher needs 'to identify people or elements in the population with specific characteristics that are related' to the research topic (Newby, 2014, p.252), it was not deemed appropriate for this study. Firstly, this study does not require participants to be broken down by characteristics within the expatriate teacher population, for example, subject specialists or teachers from a specific country. Instead, the only criterion for participation was that expatriate teachers taught in public schools in AD and used social media. Secondly, while it might be useful to divide the sample, for example by age group, home country, subject taught, number of teaching years in AD and gender, and allocate quotas according to the research goals and taking guidance from Yang and Banamah (2014), the corresponding proportion to the expatriate teacher population, this was not a necessity in this study. Moreover, and as indicated by Newby (2014), analysis of the data was not based on different categories of expatriate teachers other than when differences between current and former teachers' social media user type was differentiated. Finally, quotas might prove difficult to meet which would affect the conclusions that are drawn as these would need to be based on an acceptable number of participants from each group (Newby, 2014).

Another non-probability sampling method that was considered was specialist group sampling. According to Newby (2014), this would be useful when a study requires input from a 'closely defined group' whose selection would be based on specific criteria. In this study, this might have been the selection of advanced users of social media due to their extensive use of social media for a wide range of activities including generating content. The influence of social media might have provided different insights into its influence on their recruitment and retention. Instead of providing an unprejudiced view, specialist group sampling provides detailed description and insights from the specialist group based on their unique experience (Newby, 2014). While this might have provided different insights based on the extensive use of social media by advanced expatriate teacher users, to those revealed in this study, the researcher aimed to generate a more balanced view based on the views of both current and former expatriate teachers in AD regardless of how they used social media. In addition, an initial survey would have needed to be conducted to establish which teachers classified themselves as advanced users of social media, after which the final survey would only be sent to these participants. Moreover, the classification by teachers as to whether they were advanced users or not may have been based on their perceived use of social media, and their understanding of the criteria, which may have been open to misinterpretation.

#### 3.4.5.2 Chosen sampling methods

As mixed methods research calls for decisions to be made for both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the study (Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 2006), two types of non-probability sampling methods were used. Snowball sampling was used during the online survey phase of data collection. This type of non-probability sampling method, according to Bryman (2016), is a type of convenience sample but distinctly different in that the initial teachers employed in the researcher's school were used to establish connections with other expatriate teachers who either worked in other schools in AD or were formerly employed in AD but had moved back to their home country. The initial sample for the online surveys started with 13 expatriate teachers in the researcher's school, but increased to 52 after these teachers established connections with existing or former expatriate teachers. In total, 29 existing and 23 former expatriate teachers completed the online survey. Of the 52 participants, 47 were female and 5 were male. As this does not proportionally reflect the gender distribution of the expatriate teacher population in AD, no conclusions will be drawn on the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention based on gender. Of the 52 online survey participants, 2 stated that they did not use social media and therefore, their responses were not included in the quantitative data analysis. Details of the initial sample are shown in **APPENDIX I**.

Given that snowball sampling facilitates access to difficult to reach populations (Newby, 2014), this method of sampling was chosen as it enabled former teachers who were no longer employed in AD public schools to participate in the study. Taking guidance from Newby (2014), the referral process where the initial participants forwarded the survey to other expatriate teachers they knew increased response rates. As indicated by Newby (2014), access to these teachers would have been difficult for the researcher, and if established, may have been futile as the teachers may have wanted to know the researcher personally before participating in the survey. However, receiving the link to the survey from an expatriate teacher they knew facilitated greater participation. It is acknowledged however that with this method of sampling, 'it is unlikely that the sample will be representative of the population' (Bryman, 2016, p.188). Furthermore, although there may be issues with bias, snowball sampling 'can result in representative samples in terms of sociodemographics, and inference is possible' (Kowald and Axhausen, 2012, p.1089). Emphasising the trustworthiness of the study can mitigate issues with selection bias (Kowald and Axhausen, 2012), and therefore to this end, an information summary was issued to survey participants which outlined the purpose of the research and the reason for their participation in the research. Participants were informed that the purpose of the

research was to examine their use of social media in relation to recruitment and retention, and not their private use of social media which provided reassurance that the researcher would not use any content that they had posted on social media prior to, during, or after the survey was conducted. Furthermore, although the survey collected sociodemographic information such as age, gender, education level, country of origin and years of experience, it did not require identifiable information such as the participant's name or the school they worked in which preserved the anonymity of the participants.

Convenience sampling, as indicated by Newby (2014) was used for the focus groups because of the small number of expatriate teachers working in the researcher's school who were amenable to the focus groups being conducted in the school. Some of the teachers who took part in the initial online surveys participated in the focus groups as previously shown in **APPENDIX E**. This is referred to as a 'nested relationship' between the samples used in the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research where the participants selected for the qualitative research were a subset of those who had participated in the quantitative phase (Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 2006, p.89).

This choice of sampling was used to try to maximise participation rates which Bryman (2016) acknowledges is an advantage of convenience sampling. While it could be argued that these teachers do not reflect the general expatriate teacher population, it is fairly representative in terms of countries of origin and subjects taught. Like convenience sampling, snowball sampling in the online survey did not enable the representation of the general expatriate teacher population in AD as only four male teachers participated, but it did facilitate access to teachers who had left the AD education system during the online survey data collection phase. Their insights were deemed valuable as they provided a more reflective perspective of their experiences while employed in AD.

#### *3.4.6 Data collection schedule*

A data collection schedule (see **APPENDIX J**) was developed to ensure that the data collection process was systematic and did not extend beyond the allocated timeframe. The data collection schedule was invaluable as it provided guidance in terms of the activities that needed to occur during the data collection phase and the order in which they needed to be conducted. It also ensured that data collection occurred after final teacher evaluations for current teachers so that teachers did not feel that their participation influenced the outcomes of the final evaluation. Moreover, it was important to conduct the focus group interviews before the end of the academic year when expatriate teachers would not be available for face-to-face focus group interviews.

#### *3.4.7 Strengths of data collection methods*

Online surveys and focus groups offered several benefits during the data collection process. Online surveys allowed teachers to express their views in their own time with minimal influence from the interviewer. Focus groups enabled a more in-depth exploration of the views expressed and clarification of misconceptions by the interviewer. The preference to use online surveys as the initial method of data collection with further exploration through focus groups as highlighted by Morgan (1996, p.135), facilitated the clarification of 'poorly understood results' and generated more detailed information on the topic being researched. Moreover, the questions in the survey were used to develop a general understanding of the specific issues related to this study, while focus groups were used to examine the thoughts and behaviours of participating groups (Newby, 2014).

While online surveys enabled participants to share their views with limited influence from the researcher and other participants, focus groups enabled interactions, which, as highlighted by Bryman (2016), can result in the contesting of views expressed during the discussions. Furthermore, through probing either from the interviewer or other participants, focus groups facilitated the understanding of participants' views and any



changes or adjustment of these views, which may not have been apparent without the interactions that are prevalent in this method of data collection (Bryman, 2016). The recording and inclusion of the interactions between the interviewees in this study enabled participants, to 'verbally formulate their ideas and draw out the cognitive structures which previously have been unarticulated' (Kitzinger, 1994, p.106).

### **3.5 Methods of data analysis**

As a mixed methods approach was used, it was necessary to use different methods to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data. As quantitative data is data that can be 'measured along one of several measurement scales' while qualitative data 'reflect beliefs, attitudes, views' in 'the form of verbal statements, written accounts, behaviours, accounts' (Newby, 2014, p.668), it stands to reason that different methods of analysis were employed.

#### *3.5.1 Compatibility of quantitative data analysis with theoretical framework*

As evidenced in the online survey (see **Appendix D**), guidance on the questions to pose was taken from gratifications sought and obtained as highlighted in the reviewed literature. Questions on participant beliefs and attitudes of the influence of social media on their recruitment and retention stemmed from prior research on social media uses and gratifications and provided a solid foundation in which to conduct the surveys and a guide to analysing the data. The needs of expatriate teachers in relation to social media were linked to the needs identified in U&G and Maslow's hierarchy of needs in Chapter 2. The themes identified by Whiting and Williams' (2013) and Bae's (2018) gratifications sought, as highlighted in Chapter 2 provided a useful guide to the options offered in some of the questions in the online survey as were the gratifications obtained as described by Cutler and Danowski (1980), Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) and Gan (2018). Consequently, the Conceptual Model of Uses and Gratifications in social media as illustrated in Figure 2.2 proved invaluable as an heuristic as it focused the questions, and hence the analysis of the data collected in the surveys. While it is acknowledged that the quantitative data analysis methods employed fail to provide the explanations required in critical realism, this shortcoming is addressed in section 3.5.3 where the compatibility of thematic analysis with critical realism is examined.

#### *3.5.2 Quantitative data analysis*

To analyse data from the online surveys, a combination of univariate and bivariate analysis was used in Microsoft Excel as it is capable of performing the statistical analysis (Connolly, 2017) required in this study. With univariate analysis, one variable is analysed at a time which contrasts with bivariate analysis where two variables are analysed to assess whether there is a relationship between the two (Bryman, 2016). Several approaches to univariate and bivariate analysis, as highlighted by Bryman (2016) were used. For example, frequency tables were used to show the number of respondents according to age category, country of origin, years of experience, highest qualification, years in AD public schools and daily social media usage. Bar charts were used to display how teachers found out about teaching opportunities in AD public schools and their reasons for seeking employment in AD. Further, mean and median as measures of central tendency were used together with range and standard deviation as a measure of dispersion for years of teaching experience in home country, length of time in AD public schools and daily social media usage.

To test for a correlation between social media user type and how important social media is to expatriate teachers living and working in AD, chi-square test as a method of bivariate analysis was considered, as indicated by Bryman (2016), to test for statistical significance. According to Newby (2014), chi-square test is:

A non-parametric statistical test that uses counted data to determine the significance of any difference between an observed distribution of data and a distribution that would be expected given specific assumptions. (p.658)

Data from the online survey suggested that there were more former teachers who categorised themselves as advanced users of social media compared to current teachers. The assumption therefore was that advanced users were more likely to indicate that social media was very important to them as expatriate teachers living and working in AD. However, the sample size and sampling method limited the use of chi-square test. Chi-square test would have been suitable as a bivariate method of analysis due to, as indicated by Bryman (2016), the types of variables being analysed. The social media user type, for example, advanced user, is, taking guidance from Bryman (2016), a nominal or categorical variable, while the value placed on living and working in AD from most important to least important on a seven-point scale is an ordinal variable.

As non-probability sampling was used for the online survey, and taking guidance from Bryman (2016), chi-square test could not be used as the findings cannot be generalised to the expatriate teacher population. Additionally, the data obtained in the online survey is not, as indicated by Hess and Hess (2017, p.877), 'a simple random sample'. Further, the sample size for this study was not large and therefore, as indicated by Newby (2014), its ability to test for statistical significance would be weak due to a smaller sample size and due to some values being less than 5 for some categories. Moreover, chi-square test 'is likely to be too liberal in its estimates of significance when cells are sparsely populated' (Hess and Hess, 2017, p.877), which is the case with the data set. While both chi-square test and Fisher's exact test use contingency tables, Fisher's exact test is suitable for smaller sample sizes (Kim, 2017) where some of the cell values might be less than 5 (Hess and Hess, 2017). Its use is not recommended if there are values less than 1 (PSU, 2020), which was the case with the data set. According to Lin, Chang and Pal (2015), contingency tables that have very small or no cell values are considered sparse and consequently, present challenges from both a theoretical and computational perspective. Therefore, while it would have been insightful to establish whether there was a correlation between social media user type and the importance of social media to expatriate teachers living and working in AD, the resulting analysis using the above-mentioned bivariate analysis methods may have resulted in misinterpretation of the findings.

### *3.5.3 Qualitative data analysis and its compatibility with critical realism and U&G*

In order to ensure that the analysis of focus group data was conducted in a systematic manner that did not compromise or result in the misinterpretation of the findings, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis involves 'identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data' (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p.297).

Given that thematic analysis 'can be used within different theoretical frameworks', it is compatible with critical realism as it can work to both 'reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of "reality"' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81). Furthermore, if, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), it is used with an established theoretical framework such as U&G, it moves beyond simple description to meaningful interpretation and analysis of the findings which meets the requirements of critical realism in providing explanations; the reasons why. Indeed, selection of this method of analysis was determined, as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), by the research question and the critical realist position that:

the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'. (p.81)

Consequently, whilst it is acknowledged that from a critical realist perspective, reality is viewed as an open and complex system in which different results can be generated by the same causal powers (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2010; Edgley et al., 2016), thematic analysis can result in unforeseen perceptions of the findings and draw attention to the parallels and disparities across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, this

method of analysis is useful in discovering relationships and repetitions both in and across the data according to the views, experiences, perspectives, actions and praxes of participants (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

While conducting thematic analysis on the focus group data, direction was taken from Braun and Clarke's (2006, p.87) '*Phases of Thematic Analysis*'. As a result, Table 3.1 shows the steps taken during qualitative data analysis.

**Table 3.1** Thematic analysis steps

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	Transcription of focus group interviews.
2	Generation of initial codes.
3	Classification of codes based on themes in Thematic Map (Table 4.1).
4	Refining classification of themes.
5	Analysis of data within each theme in relation to the research focus and the themes themselves.
6	Integration of focus group findings with online survey findings.

### 3.6 Maintaining quality

In order to maintain quality during the study, considerations were made for several issues outlined below. Whilst it is acknowledged that from an epistemological relativist view, the researcher's interests, values, dispositions, how they categorise and frame their thoughts and the way they analyse things is affected by their life-path and socio-cultural situations (Maxwell, 2012), every effort was made in this research to remain objective. This, according to Newby (2014), meant making every attempt to be impartial with any judgements so that if the research was conducted by another unbiased researcher, they would reach the same conclusions when dealing with the same evidence. In addition, continuous and 'critical self-reflection' as advocated by Merriam (2009, p.229) was essential to ensure that the researcher's views as a partial insider did not influence the study.

#### 3.6.1 Generalization

According to Bryman (2016, p.691), generalization is concerned with 'the *external validity* of research findings'. Following his guidance regarding external validity therefore, the key contention here is whether the results of this study can be generalized beyond the context in which the study was conducted. In critical realism, 'emphasis on relationships is connected to its ability to infer causal relationships that are both contextually based and generalizable to' other contexts (Shannon-Baker, 2016, p.331). Interestingly, Coe (2017, p.45) citing Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that 'it may be possible for research conducted in one context to be applicable to another, but at best this can be in the form of a "working hypothesis", not a generalised claim.' They add that one would have to possess sufficient knowledge of a specific context to determine whether the research conducted in another context would have any relevance. Therefore, this study can only produce a working hypothesis that may or may not be generalised to another context due, as indicated by Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013), to the complex nature of reality from a critical realist perspective. Moreover, it is acknowledged that generalisation cannot be used with convenience samples (Newby, 2014), and therefore, from a critical realist perspective, the researcher was aware of the fallibility of their findings due to the complex nature of the world and the nature of causal mechanisms whose effects, although present, are not always observable.

#### 3.6.2 Validity and reliability

Validity is concerned with ensuring that the processes used to collect data 'accurately reflect the aspects that they are meant to measure' (Newby 2014, p.129). More specifically, internal validity relates to how consistently the findings match reality (Merriam, 2009).

However, 'one can never really capture reality', validity therefore, rather than being a product is a goal; it can never be proven or presupposed (Maxwell, 2005, p.105; cited by Merriam, 2009 p.214). Nevertheless, to increase validity, mixed methods design was used to ensure that the limitations of one method of research were addressed by the second method. The quantitative method provided breadth and scope in terms of the data collected while the qualitative method provided depth on phenomenon that needed further clarification (Annansingh and Howell, 2016). Additionally, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods resulted in a clearer and more complete understanding (Lund, 2012) of the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention. Furthermore, given the complex nature of the phenomenon being studied and indeed, the complex nature of reality from a critical realist perspective (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013), mixed methods research 'can answer complex research questions related to both causal description and causal explanation' (Lund, 2012, p.157). However, taking into account the relative nature of validity; its assessment has to be based on the intentions and conditions of the inquiry (Maxwell, 2005; cited by Merriam, 2009).

Reliability is related to how repeatable the results of a study are (Bryman, 2016). It is likely therefore that if the same study was conducted with expatriate teachers in similar contexts, some of the gratifications sought and obtained in this study would resonate with those teachers due to the possible similarity in their motivations for seeking employment in foreign countries. However, from a critical realist perspective, it is acknowledged that the same causal mechanisms, affordances in social media, could have different influences on expatriate teachers, both observed and unobserved, given the complex nature of reality. Notwithstanding, member checks or respondent validation, as advocated by Merriam (2009), were used so that some of the focus group participants could comment on the plausibility of the initial data and provisional findings. Member checks not only improved validity and reliability by minimising misinterpretation, but also empowered participants by emphasising that despite being a partial insider, there was a willingness to listen to, and make adjustments to the findings based on teacher input. Furthermore, it highlighted that the teacher's role in the study extended beyond the data collection phase and was therefore critical in establishing the influence of social media on their recruitment and retention to public schools in AD.

A further strategy, 'maximum variation' (Merriam, 2009, p.229), was used to improve validity and reliability. Taking guidance from Merriam (2009, p.229), variation and diversity was sought in the sample selected for this study which would 'allow for a greater range of application of the findings by consumers of the research'. Despite all participants being female, there was diversity in the sample chosen (see **Appendix E**) for the focus groups in terms of:

- country of origin;
- subject taught;
- age range; and
- number of teaching years in AD.

This variance in demographics improved validity and reliability as the sample did not come from one homogenous group. Furthermore, the inclusion of teachers who were no longer working in AD in the online surveys meant that there was variation as their views may have been different to those still employed in AD.

### *3.6.3 Triangulation*

Given that validity and reliability can be demonstrated through triangulation (Newby, 2014), this study used two data collection methods to not only ensure there was breadth, scope and depth in the research; but also, to corroborate the finding of the online surveys with those of the focus groups. Triangulation involves the use of two or more methods of

data collection or data sources so that results can be verified (Bryman, 2016). In this inquiry, the findings of the online survey were cross-checked with those of the focus groups, and where necessary, further clarification was sought during the focus groups to verify what had come to light during the quantitative data collection phase. In addition, the funnel pattern was used during the focus groups to ensure that emerging issues from the discussions were considered and clarified. Although this resulted in different issues emerging based on group interactions and therefore limited corroboration between the focus groups in the interviews, it did mean that further explanation within each group, a key goal of critical realism, could be sought.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethics are a key consideration when conducting research. Ethics are:

A branch of philosophy that deals with what is right and wrong, good and bad. In a research context, ethics is concerned with the rights and protection of respondents and of researchers, the misuse of data and accuracy, honour and responsibility in reporting results. (Newby, 2014, p.660)

In adherence to the University of Bath ethical guidelines (Bath, 2019), permission to conduct the research was sought prior to any data being collected. In addition, BERA (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research were followed. Once permission was granted by the university, participants were issued an information summary (see **APPENDIX K**) outlining the purpose of the research and the reason for their participation in the research. It was made clear that the purpose of the research was to examine their use of social media in relation to recruitment and retention, and not their private use of social media. The information summary included a definition of social media and some examples so that there was a common understanding at the outset.

#### *3.7.1 Considerations as a partial insider*

As an AVP in the school where both the focus group participants and some of the online respondents originated, the researcher was mindful to the possible influence this could have on the sample as there was a risk that they would feel compelled to take part in case refusal affected their end of year appraisals. Consequently, participants were notified that their involvement in the inquiry was voluntary. It was made clear to them that their contributions during the research would have no bearing on their evaluation as teachers. This is in line with BERA (2018) guidelines which highlight the importance of researchers reflecting on the influence of their professional position on participants. Additionally, they were notified that their views would remain confidential and therefore not divulged to anyone either internally or externally.

#### *3.7.2 Informed consent*

In order to respect the autonomy of participants (Hammersley, 2017), expatriate teachers were issued with informed consent forms (see **APPENDIX L**) which notified them of their right to withdraw. This is in line with BERA (2018, p.9) guidelines which state that 'researchers will remain sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish, for any reason and at any time, to withdraw their consent'. Further to this, and to ascertain clarity of purpose, an information summary was emailed to participants (see **Appendix K**). A consent form was also issued to the principal of the school where the focus group was conducted (see **Appendix M**).

Whilst it is acknowledged that this research focuses on the influence of social media on expatriate teachers, comments made on social media platforms such as Facebook were not used during the data collection process as there would undoubtedly have been comments posted by teachers not included in the sample whose permission had not been obtained. This again, is in adherence with BERA (2018, p.10) guidelines which state that data in public

domains such as social media 'should not be assumed' to be 'available for researchers to use without consent'. Participants were therefore informed at the beginning of the inquiry that their comments on social media were irrelevant to the study and as such would not be used.

### *3.7.3 Anonymity and confidentiality*

Acknowledging the importance of the researcher recognising 'the entitlement of both institutions and individual participants to privacy and' therefore according 'them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity' (BERA, 2018, p.21), pseudonyms were used to ensure that participants names and specific locations in terms of current employment were not revealed. While the inquiry specified that participants were either currently or previously employed as non-local teachers in public schools in AD, neither the school name nor their role were sought or disclosed. To ensure that data security would not be breached, a private password-protected laptop was used which was kept in a secure place. This provided further reassurance to participants that their contributions would remain confidential and that their anonymity would be maintained during and after the study. This again, is in line BERA (2018) guidelines.

### *3.7.4 Accuracy and integrity*

Focus groups were audio-recorded and then transcribed to ensure that the information was recorded faithfully and accurately, thus, according to Bryman (2016), allowing the researcher to focus not only on what participants said, but the nuances in how they interacted. Probing questions could therefore be asked to develop a deeper understanding of participants individual and group perspectives. If, as Bryman (2016) indicates, some participants refused to be recorded, the researcher was prepared to transcribe their views by hand to maintain accuracy in terms of what participants contributed, however, this was not the case. Furthermore, a summary of the focus group findings was presented to participants to enable them to contest or concur with the results to maintain authenticity and integrity.

### *3.7.5 Sharing findings with participants*

A report of the findings of the research will be shared with participants who can comment or query the findings. This is in line with BERA (2018, p.8) guidelines which state that 'Researchers have a responsibility to consider what the most relevant and useful ways of informing participants about the outcomes of the research'. Once the study was completed, participants were thanked in writing for their engagement and contributions during the data collection phase of the research.

## **3.8 Summary**

This chapter clarified both the ontological and epistemological position taken in this study which influenced the theoretical stance, choice of methodology, data collection and analysis methods, and sampling strategy. Additionally, issues surrounding quality were addressed, as was the role of the researcher during the inquiry. Finally, and crucially, the ethical considerations adhered to during the research were described with specific reference to BERA (2018) guidelines.

## CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how social media influences expatriate teachers' recruitment and retention in public schools in AD. Quantitative data from the online surveys is analysed using both univariate and bivariate analysis. Thematic analysis is used for qualitative data from the focus groups. Finally, the findings of the study are presented with links made to the reviewed literature in Chapter 2.

### 4.2 Themes identified

A review of the literature in Chapter 2, as recommended by Castleberry and Nolen (2018), informed the themes for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the online surveys and focus group interviews.

**Table 4.1** Thematic map

<b>Theme 1: Information derived from the use of social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Sharing experiences</li><li>•Sharing information</li><li>•Sharing resources</li></ul>
<b>Theme 2: Social relationships created and maintained through social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Maintaining connections</li><li>•Maintaining relationships</li><li>•Interactions with other teachers</li></ul>
<b>Theme 3: Concern, encouragement and support demonstrated on social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Showing concern</li><li>•Developing relationships</li><li>•Support and advice</li></ul>
<b>Theme 4: Convenience and ease of use of social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Convenience utility</li><li>•Ease of use</li></ul>
<b>Theme 5: Respect, recognition and achievements on social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Rewarding engagements</li><li>•Sharing achievements and successes</li></ul>
<b>Theme 6: Self-fulfilment derived from using social media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Developing new skills</li><li>•Professional growth</li><li>•Self-reflection</li></ul>

The conceptual model shown in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2) provided the starting point for identifying the themes with Maslow's hierarchy of needs further clarifying needs pertinent

to expatriate teachers. Responses from participants in both the online surveys and the focus group interviews were categorised according to the final themes and subthemes as shown in Table 4.1. Given that in critical realism, the world is laden with theories such as U&G and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, but not determined by these theories, the responses of the participants were analysed according to these theories but not determined by these theories.

### 4.3 Demographics of participants

It is necessary at this point to briefly describe the demographics of the teachers surveyed. As shown in the frequency table in Table 4.2, the majority of participants (54%) were aged between 30 and 39, while there was only 1 teacher aged between 60 and 65.

**Table 4.2** Age range of expatriate teachers

Age Category	n	%
20-29	4	8%
30-39	27	54%
40-49	9	18%
50-59	9	18%
60-65	1	2%
Total	50	100%

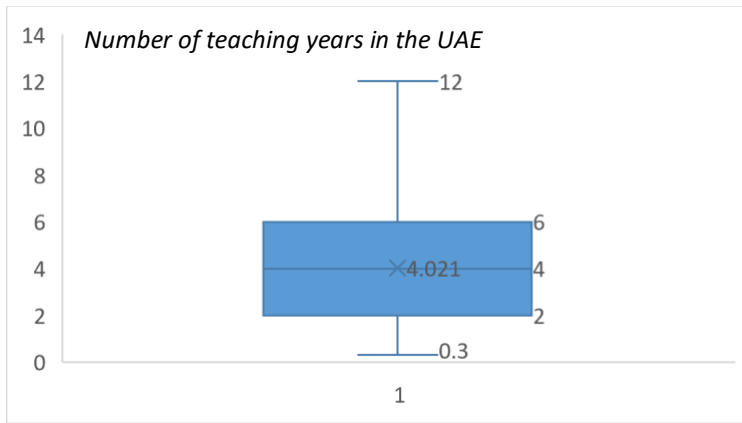
The majority of surveyed teachers originated from the USA (44%) and South Africa (22%). A smaller proportion of those surveyed were from England (14%), India (10%) and Ireland (6%), while only 1 teacher came from Scotland and 1 from Wales. While the data in Table 4.3 shows the diversity in the expatriate teacher population, it is acknowledged that the percentages shown are not necessarily representative of countries of origin for the expatriate teacher population in AD.

**Table 4.3** Expatriate teachers’ home country

Country of Origin	n	%
England	7	14%
India	5	10%
Ireland	3	6%
Scotland	1	2%
South Africa	11	22%
USA	22	44%
Wales	1	2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

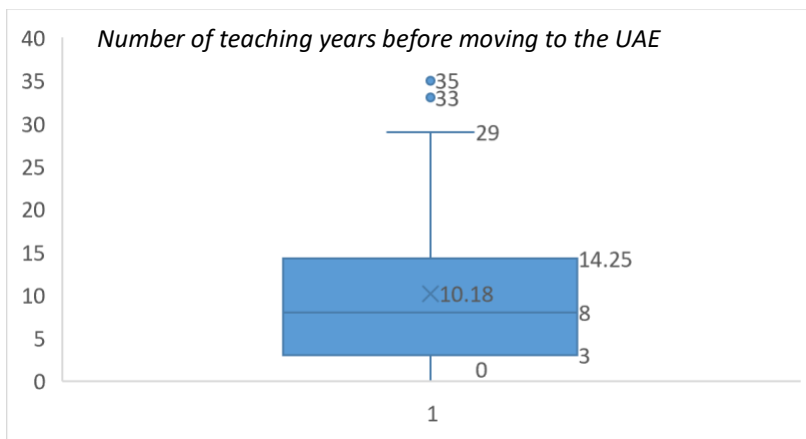
As shown in Figure 4.1, there is however, less variance in terms of teaching years in the UAE, with both the mean and median at 4, and a standard deviation of 2.7, although at the extreme end, one teacher had 12 years of UAE experience while another had only been teaching for 3 months at the time the survey was conducted.





**Figure 4.1** Number of teaching years in the UAE

As expected, the number of teaching years before moving to the UAE varies significantly with a median of 8, a mean of 10.2 years and a standard deviation of 8.7. As shown in Figure 4.2, one teacher did not have any previous experience of teaching while at the other extreme, another teacher had 35 years of experience prior to moving to the UAE.



**Figure 4.2** Number of teaching years before moving to the UAE

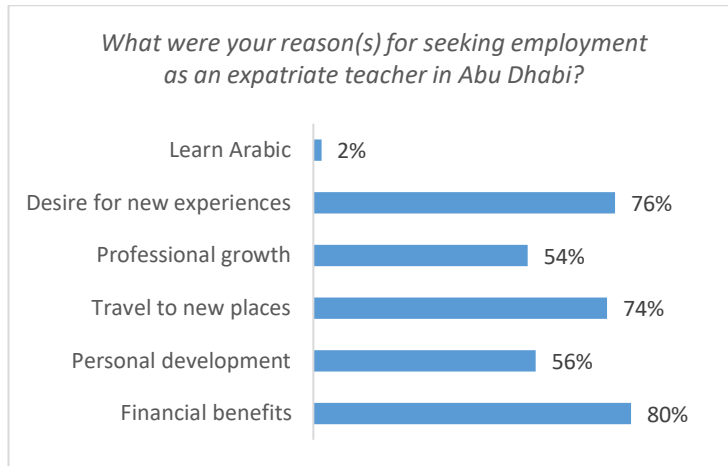
Of interest in the population surveyed, is the significant number of teachers that are educated to master's level (Table 4.4). Half of those surveyed possess a master's degree. This mirrors Caravatti et al.'s (2014) (cited by Bense, 2016) large-scale international study of migrant teachers where 49% of respondents had a Master's degree, highlighting the mobility of highly educated teachers in the global education market.

**Table 4.4** Highest qualification of expatriate teachers

Highest Qualification	n	%
Bachelors's degree	14	28%
Master's degree	25	50%
PhD/Doctorate	1	2%
Postgraduate diploma/certificate	10	20%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses from the online survey highlight that the motivation for seeking employment in AD for 80% of teachers is financial, while the desire for new experiences (76%), and travelling to new places (74%) (Figure 4.3), are also important. This echoes Smith and Ulvik's (2017, p.13) assertion of teachers' desire to 'exercise agency as teachers', becoming 'agents of their own future'. It could be argued, however, that self-actualization as indicated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not deemed as important as the above-mentioned motivations given that 56% cited that personal development was a reason for seeking

employment in AD while 54% specified that professional growth was the reason for coming to work in AD as an expatriate teacher. This could be tied to 50% of those surveyed already possessing a master's degree and therefore not considering personal development a goal in their move to AD.

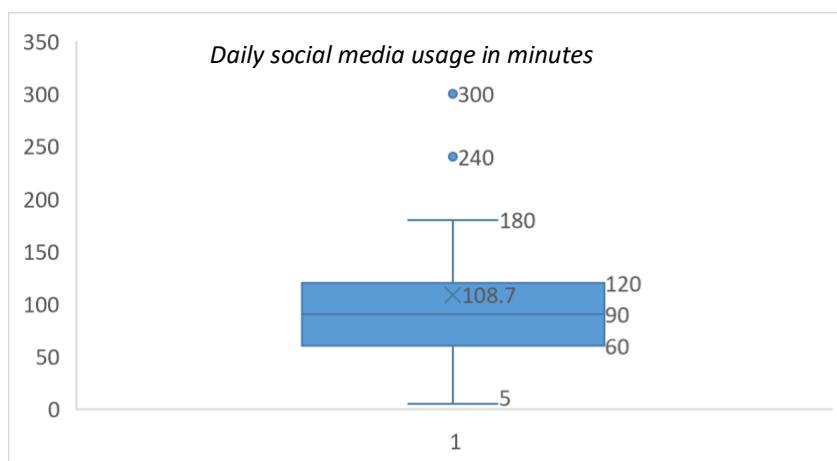


**Figure 4.3** Reason(s) for seeking employment in AD

These results could also be attributed to survey participants recognising the limited career progression prospects of working in AD and therefore not identifying professional growth or personal development as motivations for seeking employment as expatriate teachers.

#### 4.4 Social media use by expatriate teachers

Against this backdrop, it is worth examining the social media usage of respondents. Given that online survey participants indicated that they spent an average of 109 minutes on social media on a daily basis (Figure 4.4) with the median being 90 minutes, maximum usage (excluding outliers) reported at 180 minutes and the lowest at 5 minutes and a standard deviation of 59.9, it is worth examining what social media is used for by the participants in this study.



**Figure 4.4** Daily social media usage in minutes

##### 4.4.1 Reliance on social media

Comments from a teacher in the focus group interview, with agreement from the other participants, signifies the heavy reliance on social media by some expatriate teachers in this context:

*I think in this country in particular though you actually cannot function day to day without using social media. Really. At the moment I have no data and I*

*feel so disconnected. (F14 agrees) Like I said to FG12 this morning, like if anything happens, tell me because I have no data. As in everything is communicated via Whatsapp, whatever, and if I don't have access to that, I feel like something very important is going to happen, and I am not going to know about it.*

She adds:

*Like especially here in this country, I was never like that. There is such a like, like a reliance on social media here like everything happens. And you see big announcements happen on Twitter before it is even, it is even formal.*

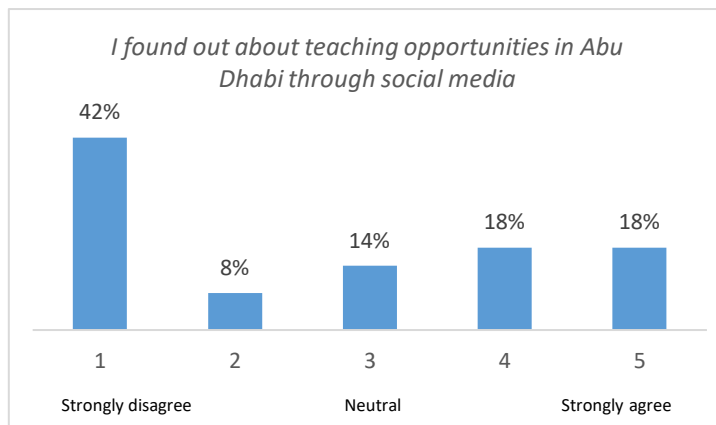
She concludes:

*So, like honestly, it's huge. It's part of like literally, if I was here on my own in the school today with no data I would die, I'd feel so disconnected. [FG11]*

This participant highlights the prevalence of social media in this context as indicated by the data from Statista (2020) where the UAE has the highest social media penetration rate globally.

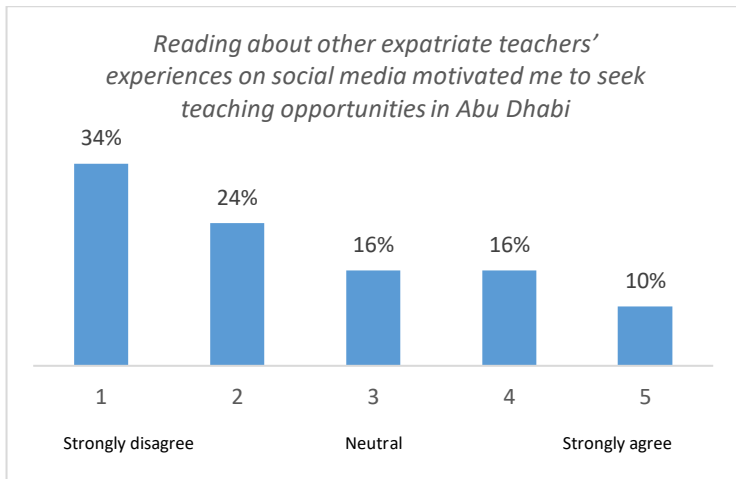
#### 4.4.2 Social media use for recruitment

Admittedly, while this study did not extensively examine social media use prior to expatriate teachers moving to AD, it did explore the influence of social media on recruitment. Interestingly, the majority (42%) of teachers strongly disagreed with the view that they had found out about employment opportunities in AD on social media (Figure 4.5) with only 36% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this view.



**Figure 4.5** Finding out about teaching opportunities in AD through social media

Further to this, 26% (Figure 4.6) of survey participants either agreed or strongly agreed that posts that they read on social media regarding expatriate teacher experiences encouraged them to seek teaching opportunities in AD. However, 34% strongly disagreed with this contention.

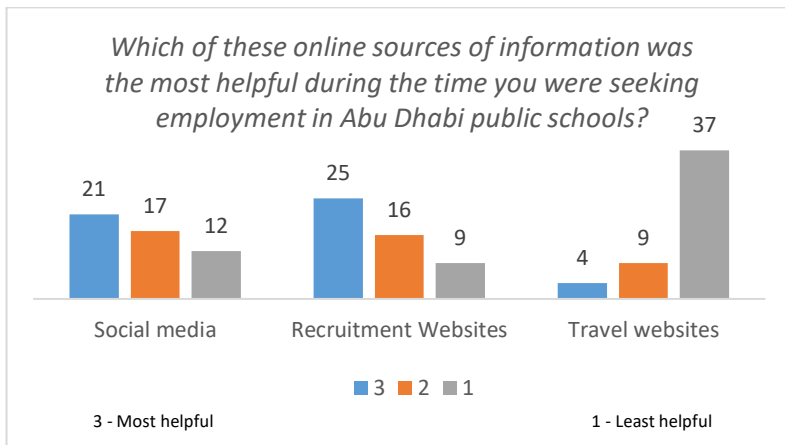


**Figure 4.6** Motivated by reading about other expatriate teachers' experiences

However, one focus group participant indicated that she found about the teaching opportunity on Facebook:

*Actually, there was an office, and they used to post jobs on Facebook. I found it through Facebook. [FG25]*

This highlights that social media has some influence on expatriate teacher recruitment. Indeed, social media was considered second to recruitment websites during the time that respondents were seeking teaching opportunities in AD (Figure 4.7) with 21 teachers ranking social media as most useful during this time compared to 25 who ranked recruitment websites as more valuable. This again highlights the usefulness of social media during recruitment.



**Figure 4.7** Most helpful online sources of information

#### 4.4.3 Social media use once recruited

While it appears that social media has some influence on expatriate teachers seeking employment opportunities in AD, focus group participants did state that social media was useful once they had secured a position in AD with one teacher who initially had no memory of using social media to find more information after securing her position recalling that she had in fact used it:

*Actually, I think I did read a good few blogs before I came down just thinking about it. [FG11]*

This recollection, based on comments made by other focus group participants, 'collective remembering' (Kitzinger, 1994; cited by Wilson, 1997, p.214-15), is one of the benefits of

using focus group interviews as interviewees recall events that they may not have remembered had they participated in one-to-one interviews. Therefore, social media has some influence on recruitment as expatriate teachers take up positions in AD after reading comments on social media to allay any concerns or queries they may have:

*Ok, yeah, some people's blogs were pretty helpful in deciding but I didn't, it wasn't until after I had applied and was offered the position before when I was finally deciding, do I come, do I not, are the good outweighing the bad, that type of thing. [FG12]*

Indeed, and as highlighted in the focus group interviews, social media was a secondary source of information once teachers had secured employment in AD and were finding out information from those in similar situations to them or those who were already based in AD before they committed to moving. The following comment highlights just how crucial social media was for one teacher who had secured employment:

*So, I may, if it hadn't been for Facebook, and being in touch with teachers who were actually being flown out here, I may have given up and gone, oh no, it's not happening, thinking it was a con. [FG22]*

In fact, for one teacher, comments on social media determined whether she moved to the UAE or not:

*Oh, as soon as, so I found the job on Teach Away and Teach Away actually took us to Facebook. So, there are Facebook groups organised by Teach Away that they have to allow you to be in but then there are Facebook, there are the groups of teachers who are already here that you know, you just hop in and you say that you are thinking about doing this and they gave you all this kind of information. And there were like 5 people that I talked to that I asked if they thought that this was a good idea. [...] So, it was, it was, Facebook was invaluable in terms of me figuring out whether or not I wanted to take this job. [FG21]*

Another teacher highlighted the importance of knowing the teachers who posted comments on social media which reassured her as she trusted their opinions:

*So, I have, I have many friends who got the jobs here before so they had shared their experiences in the social media. So, I think that was very valuable for me because they are, they were my teaching mates, so it is more valuable because I know the persons, so they know what is going on, they will be giving the, I mean the correct information, what they are going through. So, I trusted the many things, what they are telling me rather than from the blogs and all. [FG14]*

Contrastingly, one focus group participant stated that she spoke directly to friends who were already working in AD schools and actually avoided social media with its comments from people she did not know as she felt that their comments might interfere with her decision to take up employment as a teacher in AD.

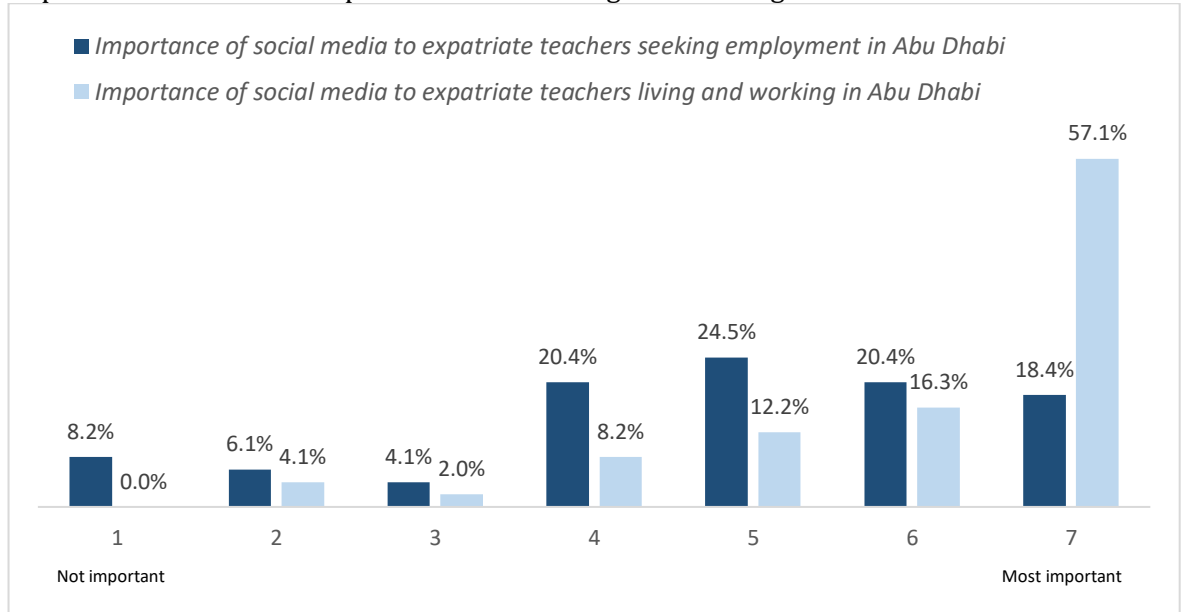
However, due to what is conceivably a major decision in expatriate teachers' lives, social media enabled prospective teachers to allay concerns they had about the validity of the job offer and indeed, the credibility of the recruiter:

*For me, I think that's why Teach Away made that because people didn't trust the recruiters. So, they made this Facebook group where you could trust actual, where you were more likely to trust actual teachers who went through it. [FG21]*

This confirms that for some, there is value in shared experiences on social media in helping people make decisions that are potentially life-changing, which in this case involved leaving family and friends, moving to a new country, working in a new education system, in a culturally and socially different context.

#### 4.4.4 Social media use while living and working in AD

While only 38.8% of teachers stated that social media was important to them when seeking employment in AD (Figure 4.8), 73.4% of those surveyed indicated that social media was important to them as an expatriate teacher living and working in AD.



**Figure 4.8** Comparison between importance of social media for seeking employment and living and working in AD

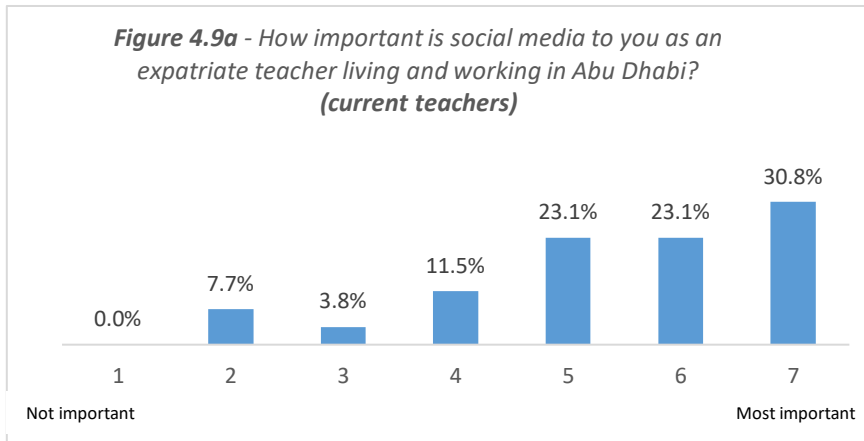
Therefore, once expatriate teachers are based in AD, social media has a significant influence on their retention and intention to remain employed in AD as indicated in the online surveys and focus group interviews. The support expatriate teachers receive from peers on social media on arrival to AD makes the settling in process more manageable, with one teacher clarifying how social media facilitated this:

*When I first arrived, the very first thing that I made sure I was involved in was a WhatsApp group with all of new expat teachers who were just after arriving and someone would find out something and put it into the WhatsApp group and I, then I would find out that way. [FG11]*

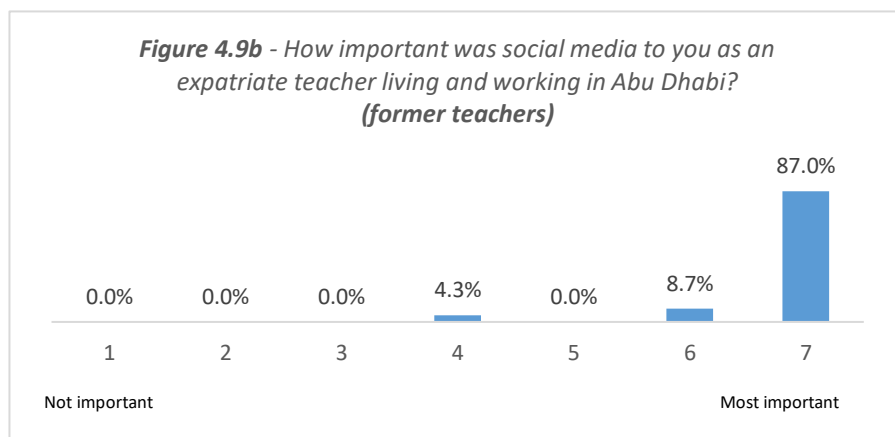
This highlights the value of information on social media and the fact that expatriate teachers can rely on other teachers to share their experiences.

#### 4.4.5 Differences in use between current and former expatriate teachers

It is worth highlighting that in sharp contrast to 57.1% of all 50 surveyed teachers (Figure 4.8), and 30.8% of the 27 currently working in AD (Figure 4.9a); 87% of the 23 teachers who are no longer working in AD (Figure 4.9b) indicated that social media was very important to them when they were expatriate teachers living and working in AD.

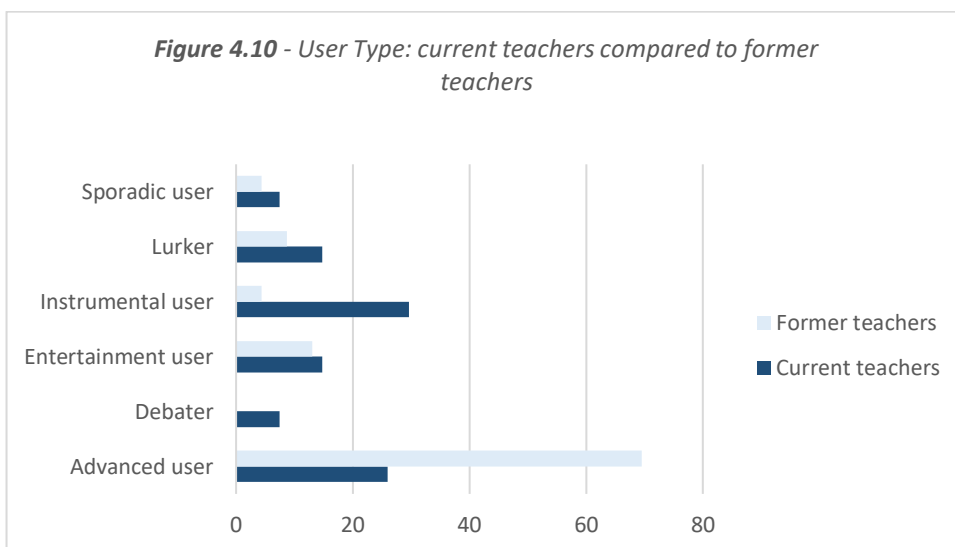


**Figure 4.9a** Importance of social media to current expatriate teachers living and working in AD



**Figure 4.9b** Importance of social media to former expatriate teachers while living and working in AD

This could be attributed to former expatriate teachers from AD reflecting on the more positive influences of social media during their time in AD.



**Figure 4.10** Comparison of social media user types between current and former teachers

It could also be attributed to the fact that 26% of current teachers stated that they were advanced users compared to 70% of former teachers (Figure 4.10), possibly indicating that

advanced users were more likely to contend that social media was important to them than other types of users.

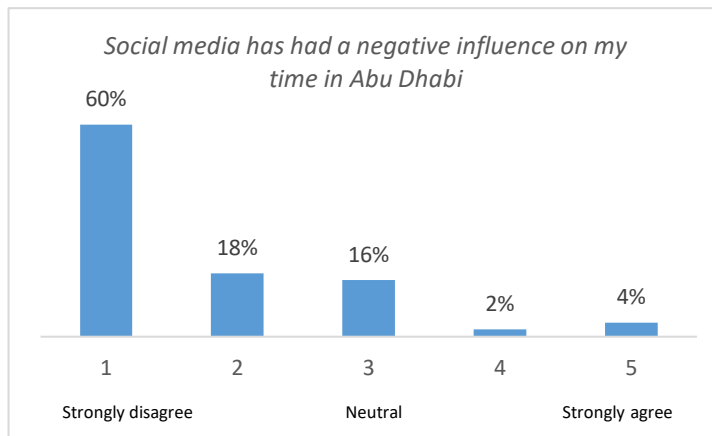
#### 4.4.6 Social media: a positive or negative influence?

Given that missing family and friends, followed by working in a new school system were deemed the most challenging aspect for those new to AD (Table 4.5), the importance of social media to mitigate these challenges is worthy of consideration. It will therefore be insightful to examine how social media mitigated these challenges.

**Table 4.5 - Most challenging aspect of moving to AD**

	<i>Most challenging</i>					<i>Least Challenging</i>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		
Different culture	4	13	15	7	1	10	50	
New lifestyle	6	12	7	11	6	8	50	
Loneliness	9	10	10	7	8	6	50	
New school system	13	21	6	6	0	4	50	
Making new friends	3	9	8	4	12	14	50	
Missing family and friends	16	11	10	6	6	1	50	

What is evident at this point however, is the contention by expatriate teachers that the use of social media has not negatively influenced their experiences in AD with 78% of participants either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this view (Figure 4.11).



**Figure 4.11** Influence of social media

It is therefore evident that the affordances offered by social media are not deemed detrimental to the experiences of the majority of expatriate teachers in AD. Given this assertion, it is worth examining the gratifications sought and obtained by expatriate teachers using social media.

## 4.5 Social media uses and gratifications of expatriate teachers

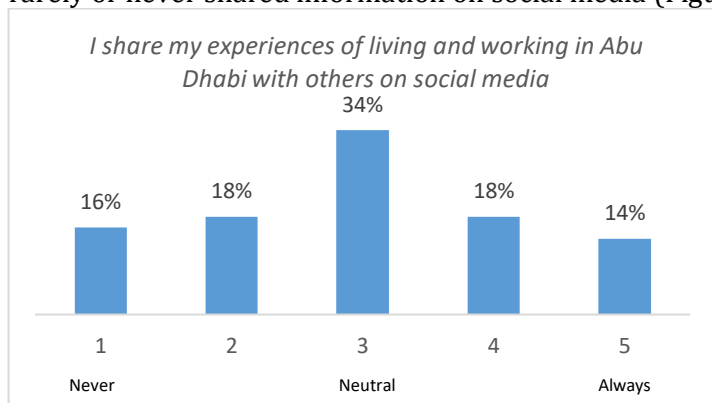
The findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will now be examined according to the themes indicated in Table 4.1. As previously stated, U&G provides a useful lens through which to examine how social media influences the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Moreover, Maslow's hierarchy of needs underscores the needs of expatriate teachers that social media satisfies. The findings from the mixed methods approach will provide the explanations that are crucial in critical realism.

### 4.5.1 Theme 1: Information derived from the use of social media

Online survey data reveals some interesting insights into content gratifications that expatriate teachers obtain from using social media. While 34% of survey respondents were

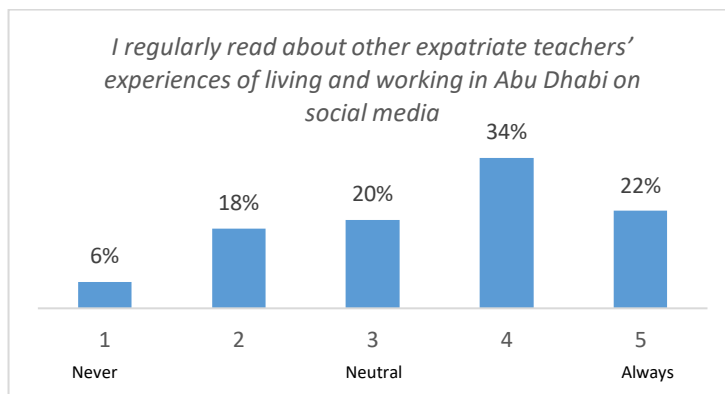


neutral in terms of sharing their experiences of living and working in AD with other expatriate teachers, 32% either mostly or always shared information. In contrast, 34% rarely or never shared information on social media (Figure 4.12).



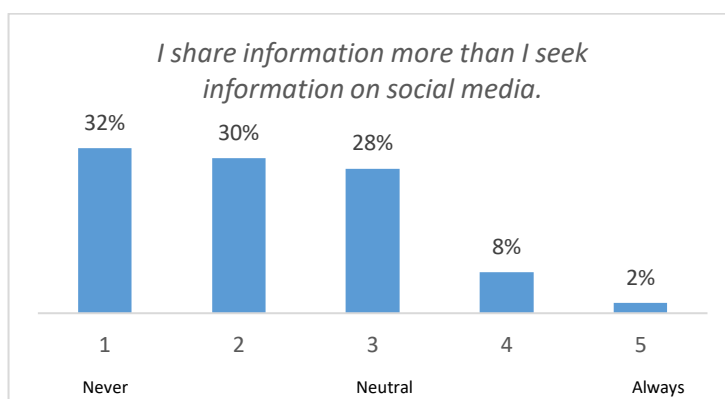
**Figure 4.12** Sharing experiences of living and working in AD

This is interesting given that the majority (56%) either always or mostly read about other expatriate teachers' experiences of living and working in AD (Figure 4.13).



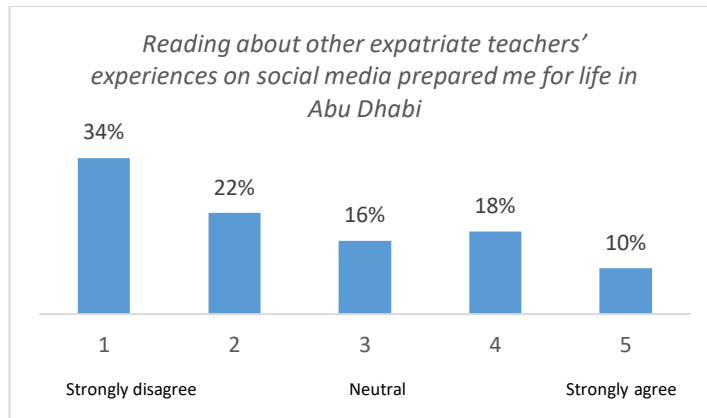
**Figure 4.13** Reading about other expatriate teachers' experiences of living and working in AD on social media

These findings indicate that expatriate teachers rate lower on Leiner et al.'s (2018) contributiveness scale. In fact, with only 10% of expatriate teachers stating that they usually or always share information more than they seek information on social media (Figure 4.14), it is clear that respondents to the survey used more consumption than contribution features on social media as indicated in Leiner et al.'s (2018) contributiveness scale.



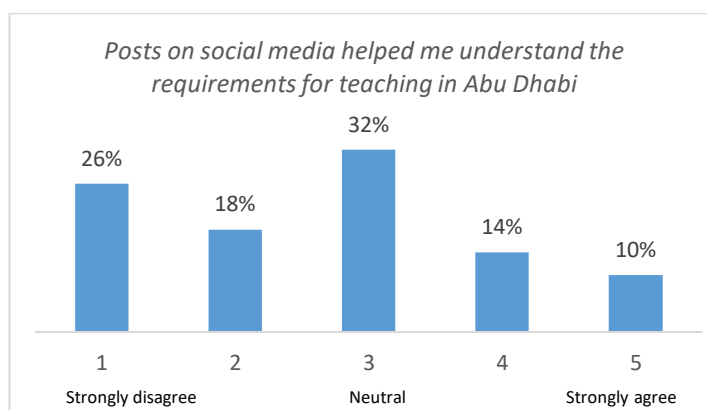
**Figure 4.14** Sharing information more than seeking information on social media

The above findings could explain why the majority of expatriate teachers (56%) did not feel that information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media prepared them for life in AD (Figure 4.15) if, as shown in Figure 4.12, expatriate teachers are unwilling to share their experiences of living and working in AD. Arguably, had the contributiveness scale been higher, expatriate teachers might have deemed the information on social media valuable in preparing them for life in AD.



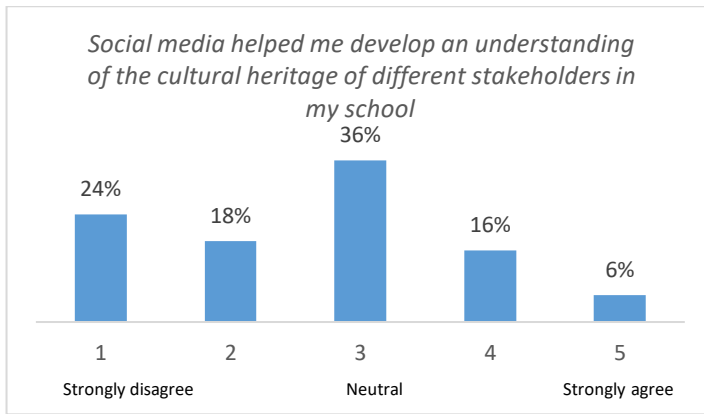
**Figure 4.15** Preparing for life in AD by reading about others' experiences on social media

In addition, the majority of survey participants (44%) did not feel that information on social media helped them understand the requirements for teaching in AD (Figure 4.16), as opposed to less than one quarter (24%) who either agreed or strongly agreed with this view. Again, this is not surprising given the low rating on the contributiveness scale for expatriate teachers in this study.



**Figure 4.16** Usefulness of posts on social media

An understanding of the cultural heritage of students, parents and local teachers may enable expatriate teachers to integrate successfully and avoid culture shock. According to Joslin (2002, p.51), maintaining 'respective core cultural identities, while at the same time, sharing understanding of the cultural heritage of others' goes some way to mitigate the effects of culture shock. Unfortunately, 42% of expatriate teachers did not feel that information on social media supported their understanding (Figure 4.17) of the cultural heritage of different stakeholders in their school.

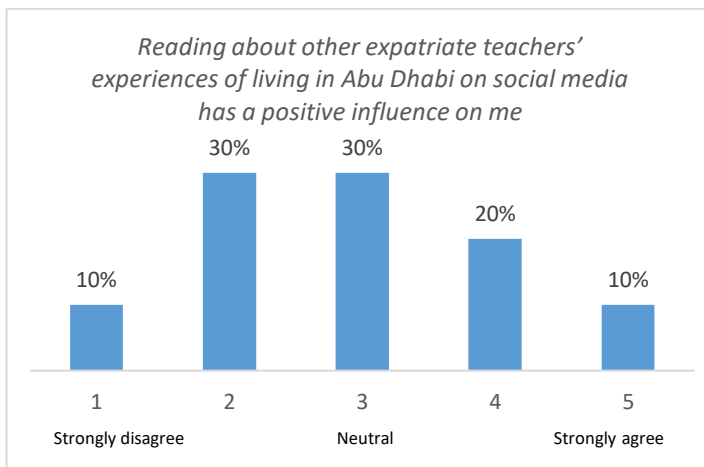


**Figure 4.17** Social media to develop an understanding of the cultural heritage of different stakeholders

This is of concern given Rass’s (2012) contention that cultural differences can add to the stress of teaching in a foreign context. Again, the limited information on social media could be attributed to the low contributiveness scale rating of expatriate teachers on social media. However, for one teacher, social media facilitated communication with a non-English speaking colleague which enabled them to work closely despite the language barrier:

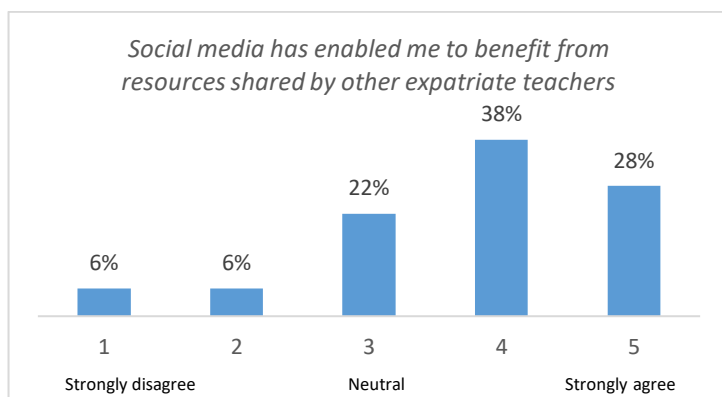
*It’s also really helpful with the language barrier. Because our science tech speaks Arabic. But she was responsible for helping me in the lab. So, on WhatsApp I can send something in English and Arabic. So I was, I did it, I do that all the time. Like, if I need to, with a teacher that doesn’t speak Arabic, that’s how we got it done. So, it really has been super helpful with the language barrier. Even with parents. Like, you know, if you are messaging a parent, it was super super helpful with the language barrier because you have this technology that will translate for you and you can’t do that in person. [FG21]*

Given the cultural differences and disparity in expectations between parents and teachers (Rass, 2012), posts on social media about how to minimise these difficulties from experienced expatriate teachers could help curtail the ill-effects of being away from home and working in a different cultural and educational context. However, only 30% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that reading about the experiences of living in AD by other expatriate teachers had a positive influence on them, while 40% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this contention (Figure 4.18).



**Figure 4.18** Social media as a positive influence

Despite the low rating on the contributiveness scale, it appears that social media enables teachers to benefit from resources shared by other expatriate teachers with 66% of survey participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement (Figure 4.19).



**Figure 4.19** Benefitting from shared resources on social media

Therefore, while expatriate teachers may not feel that information on social media helped them understand the requirements for teaching in AD or gain a better understanding of other stakeholders in their school, they do acknowledge that resources shared by other teachers have been beneficial to them. Focus group interviews further confirm this view with one teacher stating:

*Like we use social media a lot for like resources and stuff like things like that, or mock exams, like any resources I use I only get through social media really, if it's not directly from the school. So, everything else that I would use would be from other teachers that they have sent it to me via social media. [FG11]*

This ability to share resources reduces the isolation that teachers often experience in new contexts (Mercieca and Kelly, 2018). However, one teacher in the second focus group had a completely different perspective stating:

*In terms of actually sharing physical resources we use in the classroom, teachers are not very good with that anyway. I don't think I can find anything on Facebook. Like I'm doing this lesson this way, this is my worksheet, teachers do not do that. Everybody is just reinventing the wheel everywhere because people don't like sharing stuff. [FG22]*

This view echoes the views shared by some teachers in Muls et al.'s (2019, p.172) study of lack of sharing and 'reinventing the wheel'. It would have been interesting to see how the discussion would have evolved had these 2 teachers participated in the same focus group.

When asked to imagine working and living in AD without access to social media, focus group participants were clear that not only would they have very little information on what was happening around them, their determination to remain employed in AD would have been hindered significantly. The following comments from participants in Focus Group 1 highlight just how important social media is to them:

*It's scary, It's as vital as oxygen. I think we rely on it [social media] too much. [FG11]*

*I think we cannot survive without social media. [FG14]*

*I don't know that I would have been able to function. [FG12]*

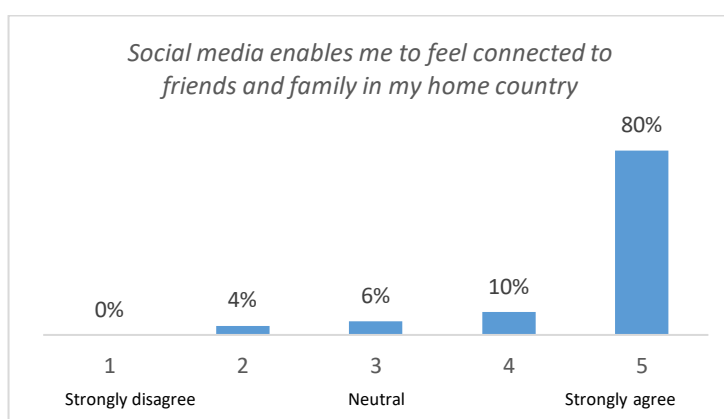
One user surmised the feelings of the group:

*Every aspect of life in the UAE in particular is a lot to do with social media, like your personal life and your work life. Everything is communicated via social media. [FG11]*

This final statement provides some indication of the perceived value of social media to satisfy the content gratification for expatriate teachers.

#### 4.5.2 Theme 2: Social relationships created and maintained through social media

The importance of social media in enabling expatriate teachers to feel connected to friends and family in their home country is noteworthy with 90% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this view (Figure 4.20). This finding mirrors that of Whiting and Williams (2013, p.366) who found that '88 percent of respondents mentioned using social media for social interaction' with participants using 'social media to connect and keep in touch with family and friends, interact with people they do not regularly see'.



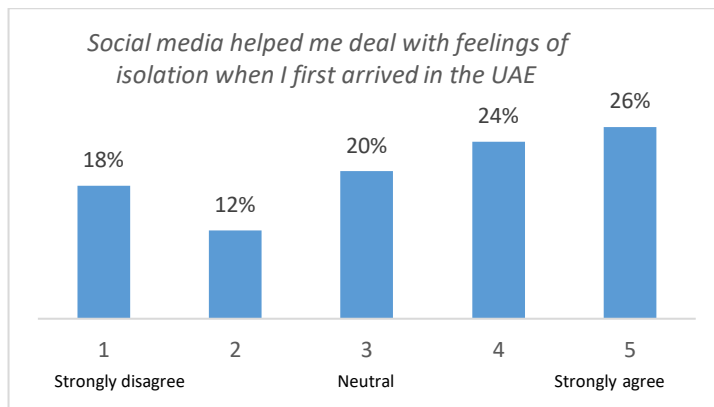
**Figure 4.20** Social media facilitating connection to friends and family in the home country

Moreover, the mean for survey participant responses was very high at 4.66 with a low standard deviation of 0.77 indicating a low variation from the mean. This highlights the importance of social media in satisfying the need for expatriate teachers to feel connected to their family and friends despite being away from home. Furthermore, given that missing family and friends was considered the most challenging aspect of moving to AD (Table 4.5), the gratification sought, that is, connecting with family and friends, is satisfied by using social media for 90% of teachers. Moreover, teachers in the focus groups highlighted the significance of social media in enabling them to feel connected to friends and family:

*For me, I don't know, without social media I don't think, although I am here with my family, but you know the other members of my family, my mum, my dad, so you know, as I said for me, it is even to communicate with my family and friends. It has a lot of importance. So, I don't know if I would be here if social media is not there because the connectivity would have not been there. You are here all by yourself, you are all alone. And also, like making friends. [FG23]*

*I would have been completely isolated, probably mentally sick I would admit. [FG24]*

Indeed, 50% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that social media helped them deal with feelings of isolation when they first arrived in AD (Figure 4.21).



**Figure 4.21** Social media helping expatriates to deal with feelings of isolation

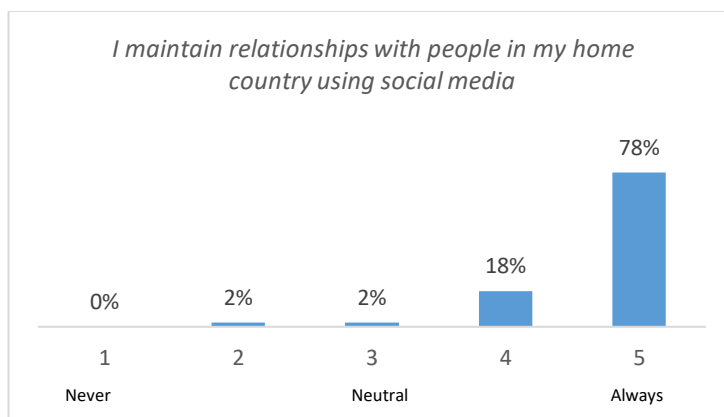
Social media therefore enabled a large majority of expatriate teachers to feel connected to friends and family in their home country, thus satisfying their social needs and consequently, it could be argued, their determination to remain employed in AD. This is evident in the comments made by one teacher:

*For me I am not having the same feeling. I am not having a feeling that I am missing them. Because er, I'm getting the current news. Every day, every day I used to talk with my parents, and my husband, my children. And in the beginning, I was having a loneliness feeling. And now I've made up. I have come to a level that, er, they are with me always using this social media. [FG13]*

Indeed, teachers in the focus group interviews indicated that limited or no connection to family and friends in the home country would have reduced the length of time they worked in AD, with one teacher who was leaving at the end of the academic year highlighting that her time in AD would have been even shorter without social media:

*Already I'm leaving after 2 years, so I think it would have been 1 and done. [FG12]*

Moreover, 96% of survey respondents stated that they always or regularly used social media to maintain relationships with people in their home country (Figure 4.22). Additionally, the mean for survey participant responses was very high at 4.72 and a low standard deviation of 0.61 pointing to a low variance from the mean, indicating the importance to expatriate teachers of maintaining relationships with people in their home country. This is in sharp contrast to the findings in Wang, Tchernev and Solloway's (2012) study where social needs were not gratified by the use of social media.



**Figure 4.22** Using social media to maintain relationships with people in the home country

Therefore, social media not only enabled the majority of expatriate teachers to feel connected to those in their home country, but more importantly, enabled them to maintain these relationships while away from home further providing social gratification to these teachers. Indeed, and as shown in Table 4.6, 96% of respondents in the online survey stated that communicating with friends and family on social media positively influenced their decision to remain employed as expatriate teachers in AD. This was in significant difference to the next most popular affordance shown in Table 4.6, i.e. information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media (64%).

**Table 4.6** Social media uses that have positively influenced expatriate teachers' retention

Criteria	Code	Responses	%
The ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time	1	30	60%
Information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media	2	32	64%
Knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences through social media	3	31	62%
Social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media	4	26	52%
Encouragement from other expatriate teachers on social media	5	21	42%
Encouragement from friends and family on social media	6	20	40%
Communicating with family and friends on social media	7	48	96%
Helping other expatriate teachers by offering advice on social media	8	22	44%
Concern from other expatriate teachers on social media	9	14	28%
Advice from other expatriate teachers on social media	10	24	48%
<b>n</b>		<b>50</b>	

Highlighting the significance of this, the focus group interviews further confirmed the importance of social media in enabling expatriate teachers to feel connected to family and friends:

*Every day we are getting updates from our, our home country, so what is happening and if there is any family issue, we are getting to know what is the exact thing, how they are doing. Everything, so it's really helpful the social media, being an expatriate teacher. [FG14]*

Moreover, data from the first activity in the focus group interview (Table 4.7) highlighted the significance of social media in facilitating ongoing communication between expatriate teachers and their families with 63% of participants asserting that communicating with friends and family on social media was most important in influencing their decision to remain employed in AD. However, some teachers did not feel that social media facilitated the type of communication that they preferred to have with family and friends:

*Like, just like sending them a WhatsApp message or text message, like, it doesn't give me what I need. Like, I need to, like, I need to hear their voice and I need to see their face. Like, especially when I call them, I'm usually stressed out about something. [...] Like I don't like, so and I don't use Facebook and stuff like that either. I just use WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn, that's it. So, I don't, yeah. It needs to be more visceral and words don't do it. [FG21]*

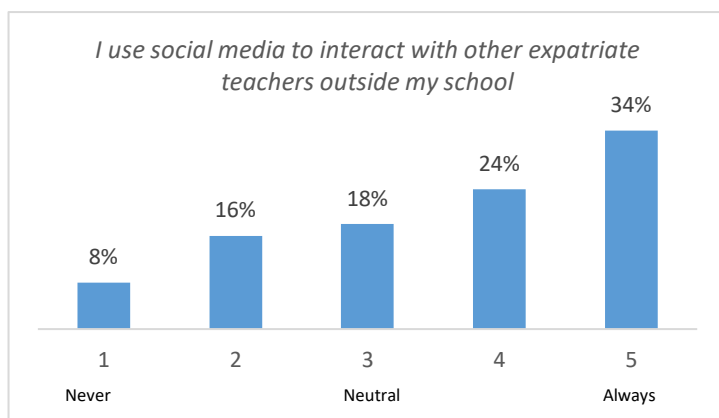
While it is acknowledged that some social media platforms facilitate voice calls, this is currently restricted in the UAE hence, in this case, social media does not satisfy the need for this teacher to speak directly to family members.

**Table 4.7** Focus group activity 1

Please rank the following social media uses in order of their influence on your ongoing decision to remain employed as an expatriate teacher in Abu Dhabi with 7 being the most valued and 1 being least valued:

Criteria	Code	Most Valued														Least valued	
		7		6		5		4		3		2		1			
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time	1	1	13	1	13	2	25	1	13	0	0	3	38	0	0		
Information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media	2	1	13	2	25	2	25	1	13	1	13	0	0	1	13		
Knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences through social media	3	0	0	0	0	1	13	2	25	1	13	2	25	2	25		
Social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media	4	0	0	0	0	1	13	1	13	2	25	2	25	2	25		
Encouragement from friends and family on social media	5	1	13	2	25	1	13	1	13	2	25	1	13	0	0		
Communicating with family and friends on social media	6	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13		
Advice from other expatriate teachers on social media	7	0	0	1	13	1	13	2	25	2	25	0	0	2	25		
<b>Total</b>		8	100	8	100	8	100	8	100	8	100	8	100	8	100		

Interestingly, while 58% of teachers used social media to interact with other expatriate teachers outside their school (Figure 4.23), 44% acknowledged that they regularly engaged in conversations with colleagues on social media (Figure 4.24).



**Figure 4.23** Using social media to interact with expatriate teachers in other schools

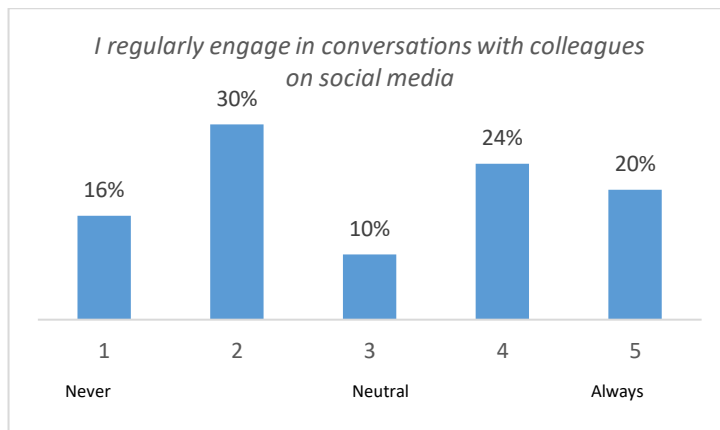
The difference could be attributed to expatriate teachers using social media to interact with other teachers, but not doing so on a regular basis or being selective about who they interact with as stated by this focus group participant:

*I don't like to be in those groups with people that I don't know. Yeah, I always remove myself from those groups. I'm only in groups with people that I have seen in person and that I know in person, yeah. [FG21]*

Another teacher added the extent to which expatriate teachers filter out people that they feel do not belong to a specified group:

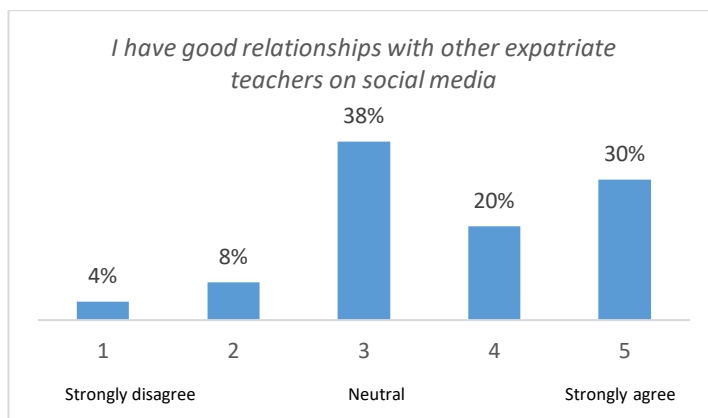
*Like if it's specific groups. So, for example, on Facebook, you would join specific groups, like tailored to what your needs are. For example, there is a specific grade 6 science group which I am admin for, so and I have to like, there is like questions which you have to answer before you are entitled to join the group to prove which year you teach in, which school, because otherwise you get like sort of spam. [FG22]*





**Figure 4.24** Engaging in conversations with colleagues on social media

With 50% of survey participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had good relationships with other expatriate teachers on social media (Figure 4.25), it could be argued that for those who feel this way, social media facilitated the subsequent conversations.



**Figure 4.25** Good relationships with other expatriate teachers on social media

The ability of users to select who they engage with on social media (Ferris and Hollenbaugh, 2018) highlights the active nature of expatriate teachers when using social media. Therefore, expatriate teachers with good relationships on social media actively select who they interact with and how they engage with them in this environment.

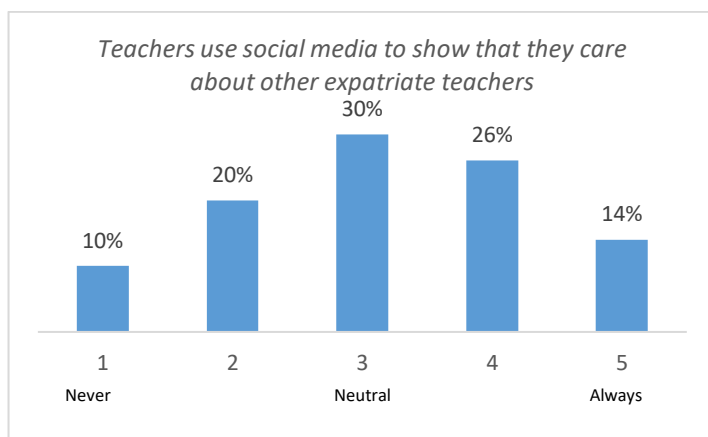
#### 4.5.3 Theme 3: Concern, encouragement and support demonstrated on social media

Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods yielded interesting insights into how social media enables teachers to feel that other expatriates show concern, and are caring and supportive of them while employed in AD. 40% of participants felt that teachers mostly or always use social media to show that they care about other expatriate teachers (Figure 4.26). For one focus group participant, social media enabled concern to be reciprocated between her and her friends:

*So, like, being concerned about other teachers and things that they are going through. I think, like that is, that's the, that's why I go to social media. Like if I need help with something, like I'll hop on WhatsApp, and I have close friends who will help me. [FG21]*

This 'emotional support' (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016) where users of SNSs express care and empathy, it could be argued, is critical to expatriate teacher retention given the previously mentioned challenges that they face. Indeed, the capacity of WhatsApp to enable individuals to create 'highly emotional messages' that support them 'in crafting an optimal as well as

archival communication experience' (Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia, 2016, p.895) further enhances the emotional support that expatriate teachers experience from using social media.



**Figure 4.26** Using social media to show care for other expatriate teachers

However, 30% were neutral and a further 30% did not feel that this was the case, suggesting either that expatriate teachers did not expect social media to meet this need and therefore this was not a gratification they sought, or that the sometimes-questionable quality or sources of information on social media alluded to in the focus group interviews, did not for some teachers, create an environment that was considered caring or supportive. For example, one teacher highlighted how this could have negatively influenced her intention to remain employed in AD:

*Well, if I was one of those people that believed everything I read on social media, I would have definitely gone home by now because of so much anxiety and frustration. But no, you have to step back. [FG11]*

What emerged in the focus group interviews was what some of the participants felt was negativity from other teachers on social media and their subsequent efforts to avoid this negativity:

*Mostly, it's mostly negative, mostly. And then also just, I think that people feel freer on social media to say whatever they are thinking because nobody knows who they are, you know a lot of the time. So, there's, you know when I was first coming here, I was just like, I know I have to stay away from this person, this person, this person, because they were just so like aggressive also, like anything that someone said, if it was a positive spin, they would, they wanted to bang and shoot them down. [FG12]*

This comment could explain the results in Figure 4.26. This finding could also explain why focus group participants were quite selective in terms of the groups that they belonged to on social media, consciously avoiding people they felt were negative, or in other words, people who would not meet their need for affection:

*Some people thrive on bad news. And social media is the place that they can just go and spread bad news. Like, I have to just step back from that like as in, I also am not a part of any of those groups.*

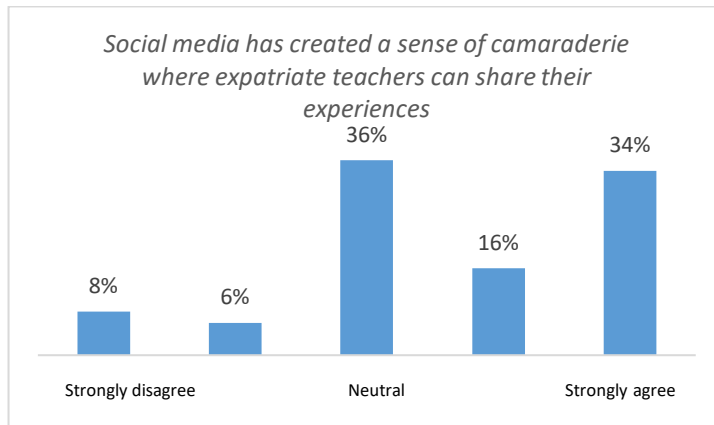
*She adds:*

*Like, I was when I first arrived because I was looking for information, but now, when I see the content, I'm just like, ok, like ok I'm gonna remove myself. [FG11]*

Another teacher concurred with this view stating:

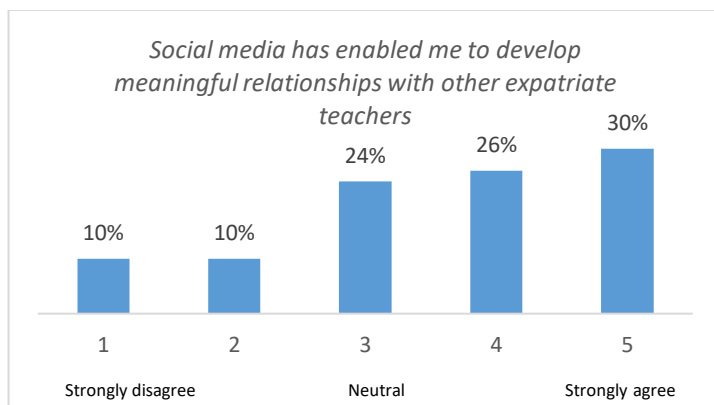
*I also removed myself from Facebook just because of this reason. [FG14]*

This active choice by teachers, it could be argued, minimises the stress which Cockburn (1996) indicates, can be caused by colleagues. It should be mentioned however, that 50% felt that social media had created a sense of camaraderie where expatriate teachers could share their experiences (Figure 4.27), although 36% had neutral views on this assertion. Camaraderie, where teachers can share experiences and recognise that they are not alone in these experiences (Hur and Brush, 2009; Cockburn, 1996), may positively influence retention, although this may not be the case if within this camaraderie, negative views and opinions are shared and validated.



**Figure 4.27** Camaraderie created on social media

Further to the camaraderie facilitated by social media, 56% of survey participants indicated that social media enabled them to develop meaningful relationships with other expatriate teachers (Figure 4.28).



**Figure 4.28** Developing meaningful relationships with other expatriate teachers on social media

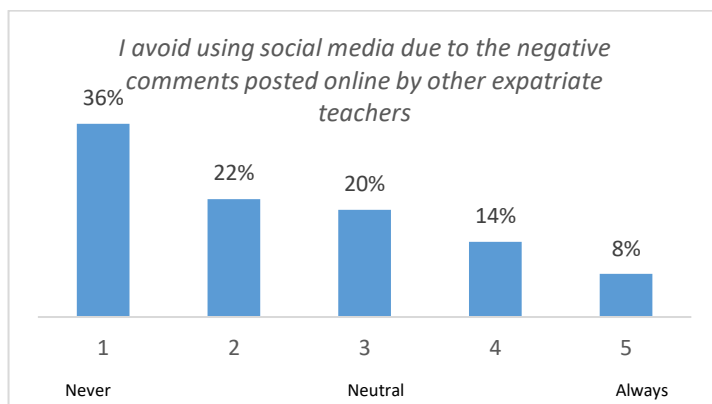
One focus group participant confirmed this contention stating:

*Like when we came here from the States, I am still in two groups with the cohort of people that we came in. We all met in the hotel. And it has to be, probably about a hundred of us now all on one WhatsApp group.... And we all, no matter what's going on, we all touch base with each other. FG21*

Given that relationships with colleagues influences teacher retention (Cockburn, 2000), and the detrimental effect poor relationships with colleagues has on retention (Howes and

Goodman-Delahunty, 2015), social media facilitates meaningful relationships for the majority of survey respondents thus positively influencing expatriate teacher retention.

The majority of teachers (58%), did not avoid social media due to negative comments posted online by other expatriate teachers (Figure 4.29).



**Figure 4.29** Avoiding social media due to the negative comments posted online by other expatriate teachers

Instead, teachers selected the groups they belonged to on social media to avoid posts that were negative or people they did not feel aligned with their beliefs or interests:

*Yeah. Um so, yeah, so you join specific groups. Same with WhatsApp. [FG22]*

This concurs with Hargittai's (2008) contention that the groups that users belong to online are a reflection of the networks in their daily life highlighting the active, rather than passive nature of social media users. Expatriate teachers are therefore actively making decisions about which groups to be involved with on social media, echoing Ferris and Hollenbaugh's (2018) views, and when necessary, disassociating themselves from groups that do not meet their needs, or that have a negative influence on their experiences in AD:

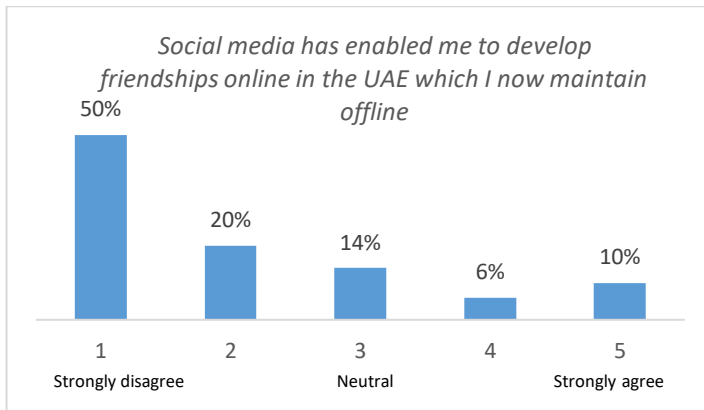
*I got off Facebook in 2015, I got back on just so I could keep up with the things that were going on with this job. And then I got back off of Facebook.*

On further probing as to why she took this action, the teacher explained:

*Yeah, coz once I knew I was coming and I got all my letters, I didn't care about the stuff on there. It became fear-mongerish. So, I was just like, no I don't need this, I got my letter and I'm going, I don't need to share. [...] I was like I don't need to share my experiences. The people that I really liked from the group, we traded numbers so we moved from that social network platform to another. [FG21]*

This perspective echoes Hunt, Atkin and Krishnan's (2012) contention that the reasons for using SNSs change over time, with expatriate teachers' needs changing based on their goals and what they want to achieve.

While the reviewed literature has highlighted that social media enables users to develop friendships online, that they go on to maintain offline (Humphreys, 2016), the majority of survey participants did not share this view with half of survey participants strongly disagreeing. Only 16% of survey participants agreed with this contention (Figure 4.30), indicating quite possibly that the majority of expatriate teachers preferred to use social media to maintain established friendships.



**Figure 4.30** Developing friendships on social media which are maintained offline

However, responses from the focus group interviews highlighted that for those who had developed friendships online, the maintenance of these friendships offline was of value to them echoing the view that ‘some online activity can also extend offline’ (Fox and Bird, 2017, p.666):

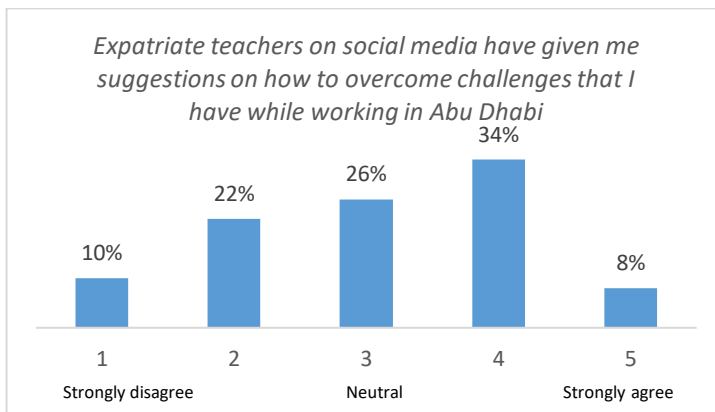
*So, they have joined dragon boating through Facebook groups, through, you know, the meet up groups and by posting it on the teacher groups. That’s how I found two very close friends, just by posting you want to try something new and forget about all the stresses of this then come and try dragon boating. And they did, for two of my best friends. [FG22]*

For those teachers that looked to express friendships on social media with other teachers, their need for affection was gratified. The extent to which expatriate teachers maintain online relations by showing care and concern to expatriate teachers they have met online is evident in this teacher’s comment:

*Like one lady’s husband died, and it was just like sending condolences for her when we couldn’t like actually get there or different stuff like that. [...] Or if it’s a birthday or if somebody had a baby, we go crazy. [FG21]*

The value of this support to those receiving it is worth highlighting, and quite possibly, it’s positive influence on the recipient’s intention to remain employed in AD despite changes to family circumstances either in AD or in the home country.

It is insightful that 42% of teachers felt that expatriate teachers on social media had given them suggestions on how to overcome challenges that they have had while working in AD (Figure 4.31).

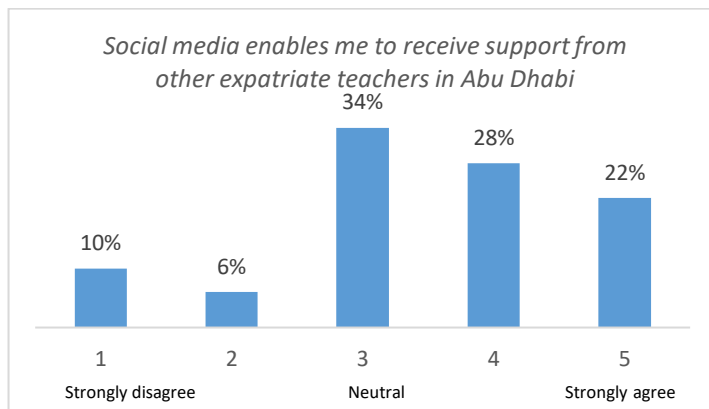


**Figure 4.31** Suggestions on social media to overcome challenges while working in AD

It is worth highlighting that a slightly lower 32% disagreed, while 26% were neutral on this view. However, when discussed in more depth, participants in the focus group interviews shared how expatriate teachers on social media helped them overcome challenges before they moved to the UAE and once they were working in AD, with one teacher clarifying the type of gratification she sought on social media:

*Especially how the system is, whether it is the same system that I was following in India. And I found out the difference and er, I was trying to find the methods, the different methods that the teachers used to use here to teach UAE students. [FG13]*

The contention by Mercieca and Kelly (2018) that social media offers teachers the support they need is, to some extent, indicated in this study. Indeed, 50% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that social media enabled them to receive support from other expatriate teachers in AD (Figure 4.32).



**Figure 4.32** Social media facilitating support from other expatriate teachers

Echoing the findings of Whiting and Williams (2013, p.366) that social media enabled users to 'learn new things', one teacher highlighted its value stating:

*Now also, I am getting the help, whatever, if they plan something, they used to give on WhatsApp. So especially for Maths, they are helping me a lot. Without social media, I would have nothing. [FG13]*

This statement reflects Howe-Walsh and Schyns's (2010) assertion that expatriate teachers need information and support to help them adjust to their new context. The professional support from colleagues for new teachers is critical to retention (Dickson et al., 2014). Noteworthy, focus group participants highlighted that questions or concerns that they had regarding curriculum delivery or assessment could be commented on by other teachers on social media, thereby either validating their own thoughts or offering alternative solutions. Informational support (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016), enables teachers to make decisions based on information from other teachers. Support, according to Cockburn (2000) citing Argyle (1987), is crucial to mitigating stress in the workplace which it could be argued, influences teachers' intention to remain in their school.

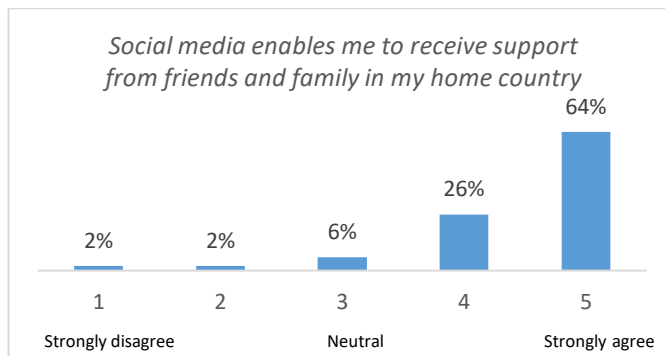
Social media also enabled teachers to remain up-to-date with work commitments with one teacher in the focus group stating:

*Even if we are missing a particular lesson, like I remember, I did not go for one of my training because I had to go somewhere else. So, it was like all these teachers posted whatever they shared, so that you know, we don't miss on things. [FG23]*

However, focus group interviews also highlighted the valuable support through social media from family members with one teacher stating:

*But like, if I am having a really bad day, I'd probably WhatsApp my husband and say this, this and this, and then we'd talk about it when we go home. Yeah, definitely, or, yeah, yeah, my family. Not other teachers, I would never message another teacher and put like my burden on her, except if it was one of us. [FG11]*

Indeed, 90% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed that social media enabled them to receive support from friends and family in their home country (Figure 4.33). In addition, the mean for survey participant responses was very high at 4.48 and a low standard deviation of 0.86 pointing to a low variance from the mean, indicating the importance of the source of support to expatriate teachers.



**Figure 4.33** Social media facilitating support from friends and family in the home country

Some focus group interviewees did indicate that they preferred to talk directly to family member as opposed to sending messages through social media with teachers stating:

*But I would actually rather, I would probably call instead of social media-ing. [FG12]*

*Yeah, I too prefer that, a voice message or calling from my family, to solve this matter, rather than text messages. [FG14]*

This highlights that for some teachers, social media would not meet their need to feel supported by family unless they were able to engage in voice calls which are currently restricted in the UAE. Social media may therefore not be deemed to meet the gratification sought by those needing to hear family members' voices in real-time in order to share their experiences. This emphasises the importance of specific features resulting in users obtaining gratifications from a social media platform (Leiner et al., 2018).

Focus group interviews further highlighted the importance of other sources of support, specifically, support from teachers within the same school:

*For me, I used to do this with the teachers because I have a relationship with them, so what advice they are giving, mostly they were very useful for me, share the things. [FG13]*

Therefore, social media not only facilitates support for expatriate teachers either from family and friends in the home country, but also from other expatriate teachers, with those requiring support actively selecting the groups or people on social media from who to obtain this support.

An initial assumption at the beginning of this study was that advice from other expatriate teachers on social media would positively influence expatriate teachers' determination to remain employed in AD. However, given that less than half (48%) of survey participants shared this view (Table 4.6), highlights that other factors are considered more valuable. This was confirmed in Focus Group Activity 1 (Table 4.7) where none of the participants selected 'advice from other expatriate teachers on social media' as the most valued social media affordance that influenced their ongoing decision to remain employed as an expatriate teacher in AD. Instead, only one teacher rated this as the second most valued affordance, and one other selected it as their third option. Moreover, when focus group participants were probed further on whether they would offer advice to other teachers on social media, one teacher stated:

*To my friends who would be teachers, maybe something about the school day. But like, it would be my friends. It's not like, I don't think, not for me anyway, no random person would be seeking advice from me, but personally someone might message me but they would be my friend that are looking for advice, and it could be to do with teaching or your job, but it is more to do with the friendship rather than the fact that we are teachers, do you know what I mean? [FG11]*

Another teacher in the second focus group further clarified the reason why, for her, advice from other teachers on social media was the least valuable affordance:

*For me, the advice from other teachers on social media because I may not be in the same situation that they are. Ok, the problem will be the same, but the reasons for the problem may be different. So, you know like, I don't rely on their advices, I'd rather check what can be done in that particular, because you know, advices may differ. It's based on my experiences. [FG23]*

From this statement, it could be argued that expatriate teachers did not feel comfortable seeking advice from, or giving advice to other teachers given their varying personal circumstances. Indeed, one teacher's comment summed up what the other teachers felt:

*Yes, like, share all the resources you want, just not your opinion. [FG11]*

In a similar vein, only 42% (Table 4.6) of survey participants felt that encouragement from other teachers on social media positively influenced their determination to remain employed in AD. Focus group interviews clarified why this was the case:

*It is low for me also. Because you know what happens, our thoughts are different. The process of thinking is different. Maybe a good word for me may not be a good word for somebody else. So then, you know, it may motivate one, but at the same time it may demotivate the other. [FG23]*

One teacher in the focus group interviews clarified this further highlighting the importance of the source of encouragement:

*When it comes from the teachers from other schools, I don't prefer that, but encouragement from this school, within this school, the teachers within this school, I feel so happy when they encourage me. [FG13]*

Her comments were met with approval and a collective agreement from the other focus group participants who added that encouragement from other teachers in the same school on social media was more meaningful and relevant as they shared similar experiences given that they were working in the same school. Therefore, the assertion previously mentioned in Chapter 2, with reference to social needs by Fallatah and Syed (2018), that lack of



encouragement from colleagues would make employees more determined to meet this need is somewhat confirmed, although the source of this encouragement appears to be met on social media through family and friends, and from expatriate teachers in the same school context.

#### 4.5.4 Theme 4: Convenience and ease of use of social media

With the online survey establishing that 60% of respondents felt that the ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time positively influenced their decision to remain employed in AD as an expatriate teacher (Table 4.6), the focus groups provided further insight into how social media satisfied the gratification sought from using social media. Indeed, one teacher highlighted this ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time as having the most influence on her determination to remain employed in AD, explaining further that these groups were established when she first arrived in AD 3 years ago and that they have continued to be an integral part of her life in AD:

*Like when we came here from the States, I am still in two groups with the cohort of people that we came in. We all met in the hotel. And it has to be, probably about a hundred of us now all on one WhatsApp group.[...] And we all, no matter what's going on, we all touch base with each other. [FG21]*

The convenience of being able to communicate with multiple people at one time on social media corresponds with the findings of Whiting and Williams (2013).

The ease associated with using social media explains why expatriate teachers rely on social media while in AD with one focus group participant stating:

*And it's so easy to do it as well you know, like, like I feel that I'm not missing out on a whole lot coz I still know everything that's going on through social media. Like, like, I don't have to ring my mum and ask her what's happening this weekend, social media is more than likely going to tell me what happened or what is going to happen, so 100%. [FG11]*

Thus, its ease of use facilitates the maintenance of connections with family in the home country. The process therefore of using social media is gratifying due to, it could be argued, the inherent simplicity of the user interface and the accompanying affordances. The ability to maintain connections despite time differences is a further affordance of social media highlighting the convenience of maintaining connections with geographically dispersed family members:

*I think the time thing with social media also is, is the best thing. Just because if I wanted to call, I would have to plan up for a time and it would be, it would just be very difficult because of the huge time difference. But with social media, they post, I see it when I wake up, I post back, whatever, whatever. So, you don't have to deal with any time issues, it just, it just gets done, you know. [FG12]*

Considering the previously mentioned importance of maintaining connections with family and friends to expatriate teachers', the convenience utility of social media, more specifically, the ability to send messages that are read by the recipient at their convenience means that the important connections that expatriate teachers rely on are maintained. This view concurs with Whiting and Williams' (2013) findings that social media use was propagated by its constant availability with no time constraints.

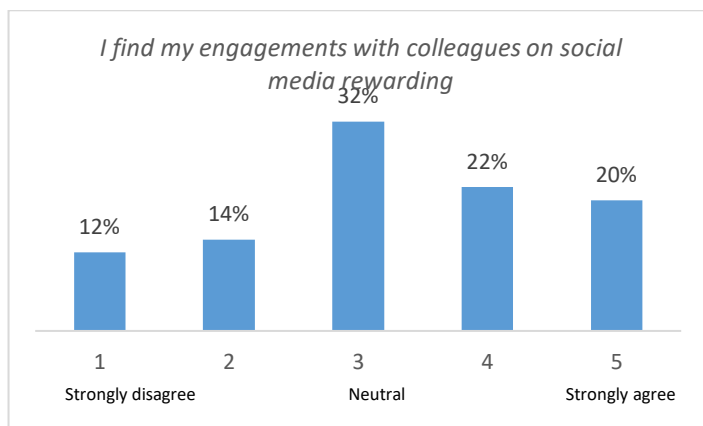
Social media has also enabled expatriate teachers to work more effectively to meet the different demands of their role:

*And she would ask, we would ask. It was a record of everybody's questions and she would answer them there [on social media]. So I was, like if I was throughout the day and I was too busy to be contacted, I would go home after work and see what I missed out on. It was concise, and it was exactly what I needed. [FG21]*

For this teacher, social media enabled her to manage her time more effectively while feeling that she was not missing out on important information relevant to her role. This echoes Weidner, O'Brien and Wynne's (2016) stance that research is increasingly pointing to social media benefitting attitude and performance in the workplace, which arguably, positively influences expatriate teachers' determination to remain employed in AD.

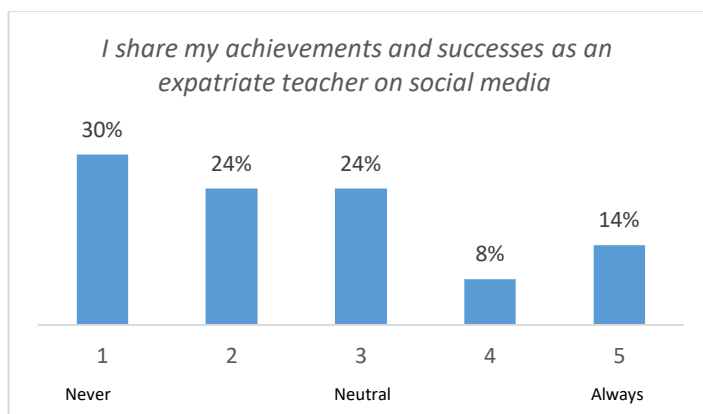
#### 4.5.5 Theme 5: Respect, recognition and achievements on social media

Given Bishay's (1996) recommendation to explore esteem to identify the higher order needs that promote teacher morale, and consequently, it could be argued, retention, the role of social media in facilitating this was critical in this study. Although 42% (Figure 4.34) of online survey respondents found their engagements with colleagues on social media rewarding, only 22% (Figure 4.35) either always or regularly shared their achievements and successes with expatriate teachers on social media.



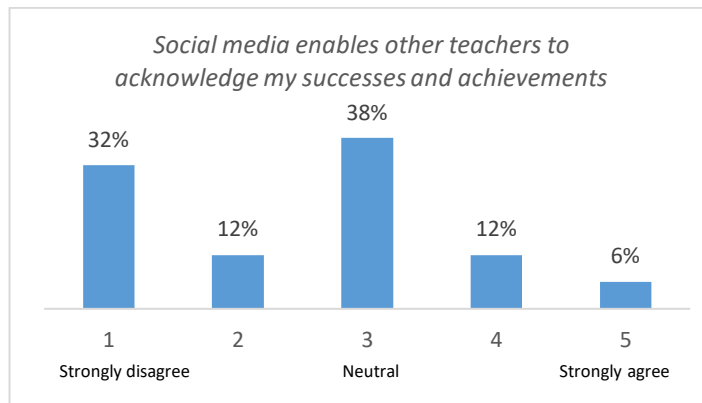
**Figure 4.34** Rewarding engagements with colleagues on social media

This suggests that most expatriate teachers are reluctant to openly discuss their achievements, thus highlighting the minimal influence of social media in raising the self-esteem of expatriate teachers.



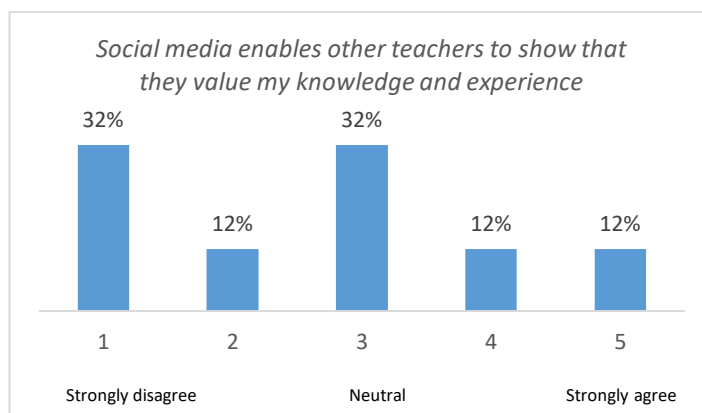
**Figure 4.35** Sharing achievements and successes on social media

In a similar vein, only 18% of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that social media enabled other teachers to acknowledge their successes and achievements (Figure 4.36). It may very well be that social media is not viewed as an appropriate or requisite platform for teachers to share or acknowledge each other's achievements and successes. Another explanation for this could be that expatriate teachers did not need their successes and achievements acknowledged by other teachers and therefore did not seek it, which could explain why 38% of online survey participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this view.



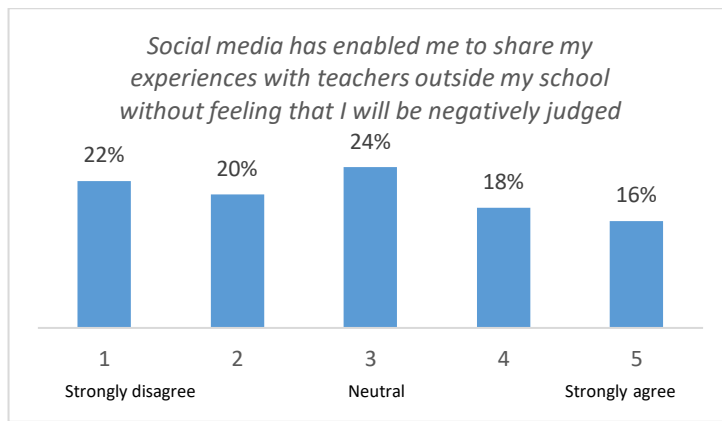
**Figure 4.36** Social media enabling teachers to acknowledge others' successes and achievements

Echoing the above findings, only 24% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that social media enabled other teachers to show that they valued their knowledge and experience (Figure 4.37).



**Figure 4.37** Social media enabling teachers to show that they value others' knowledge and experience

In fact, data from the online surveys highlights that nearly half of respondents (42%) did not feel that they could share their experiences on social media with teachers outside their school without being negatively judged (Figure 4.38).



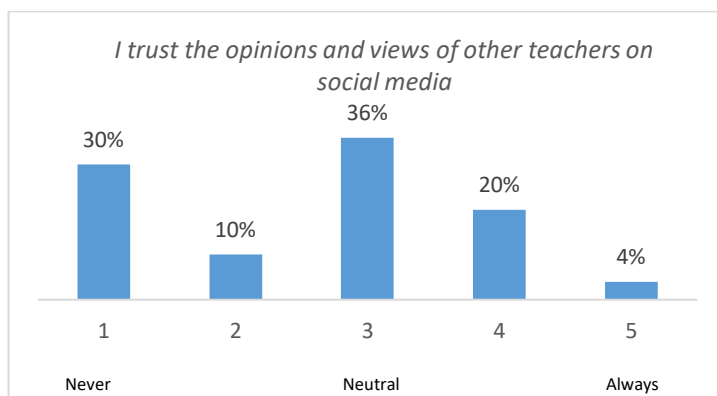
**Figure 4.38** Sharing experiences on social media without being negatively judged

This contrasts with Mercieca and Kelly’s (2018) findings that the anonymity of Facebook enabled ECTs to share their experiences with other teachers without feeling that their competency would be judged. Insightfully, responses in the focus group interviews highlighted that some teachers felt that comments on social media from other expatriate teachers could be quite negative which could explain the survey findings with one teacher stating:

*Yeah, I mean the only thing I have used is WhatsApp, I don’t, I, after the first couple of months being here I disconnected from all the Facebook groups that I was a part of and all of that because it was just too ridiculous. Too negative, too hearsay, too everything. I just didn’t want to deal with that. [FG12]*

This echoes Fox and Bird’s (2017) and Muls et al.’s (2019) view that withdrawal from social media was, amongst other reasons, attributed to negative comments made online by some teachers. The ability to create ‘micro-communities’ in WhatsApp (Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia, 2016, p.895) with expatriate teachers with similar views may offer an alternative to pre-established Facebook groups that were not deemed positive or constructive.

Another teacher in the same focus group added there was a lot of trolling online with some expatriate teachers posting negative comments about other teachers on social media. The above findings could be attributed to the low levels of trust (24%) that expatriate teachers had of the opinions and views of other teachers on social media (Figure 4.39).



**Figure 4.39** Trusting the opinions and views of others on social media

It could be argued that if survey participants do not feel that they can trust other expatriate teachers, they are less inclined to share their experiences, achievements and successes fearing negative feedback from those on social media. Focus group participants highlighted that trust came from knowing people personally:

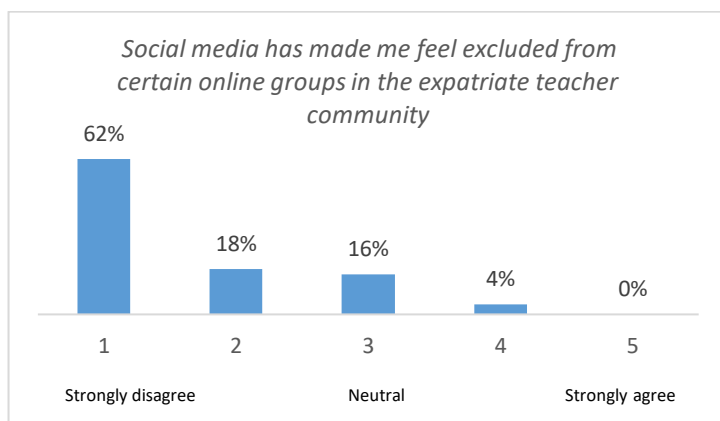
*And I don't trust people just without knowing them, or just with seeing things. If it is somebody that I know and I trust in person, then sure I might be willing to take their advice as an expat if it's on social media. But, if I don't know the person, which is what happens a lot of the time, there is just a lot of fear-mongering on social media and its easy, easy to spread it you know, so I try to avoid as much as I can. [FG12]*

However, the opinions and views of expatriate teachers has also positively influenced new teachers' intention to stay in AD given the support that is offered on social media:

*It influenced me big time. Like the moving from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, or finding the housing in which area in Abu Dhabi. I did not have many people to interact with directly. It was directly on the Facebook that I used to ask for views and opinions, and then connect with those people and ask them personally. So, it helped me, at least to decide whether I want to continue in this city, yes, where do I need to place myself which is closer to the school, to the hospital, to my job, to all this, to the market area, everything, it helped. [FG24]*

Another teacher highlighted that the friends that she has made online, and maintained offline have positively influenced her determination to remain employed in AD as they have provided valuable support due their shared experiences as expatriate teachers.

Encouragingly, and despite the findings highlighted above, survey respondents overwhelmingly (80%) disagreed that social media had made them feel excluded from certain online groups in the expatriate teacher community (Figure 4.40).

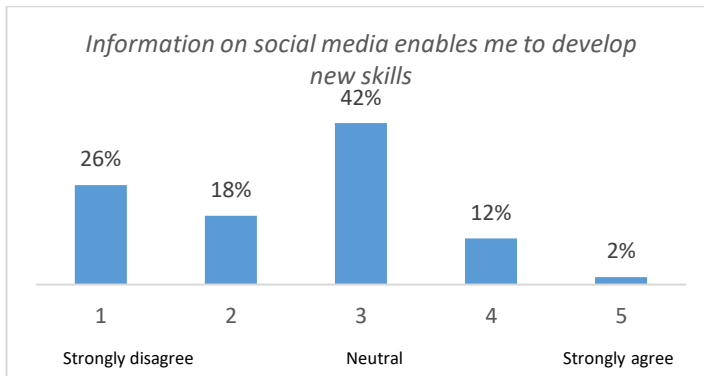


**Figure 4.40** Feeling excluded on social media

Hence, while expatriate teachers felt included in online communities, they did not feel that they could share or be acknowledged for their achievements. Again, this highlights the active role that users play in determining how they use social media and what information they share with others which concurs with the views of Ferris and Hollenbaugh (2018). Moreover, it indicates that the majority of teachers do not feel that social media will satisfy their self-esteem needs and therefore, they do not actively seek to gratify this need using social media.

#### 4.5.6 Theme 6: Self-fulfilment derived from using social media

Given that it is argued in section 4.3 that self-actualization was not deemed as important as other reasons such as financial benefits, seeking new experiences, or for seeking employment in AD, findings from the online survey are not surprising. Only 14% of surveyed teachers felt that information on social media enabled them to develop new skills while 40% disagreed (Figure 4.41).

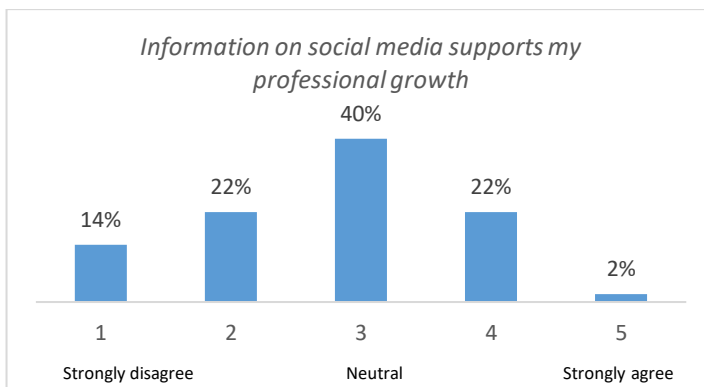


**Figure 4.41** Developing new skills using information on social media

However, comments from those who agreed with this contention in the focus group interviews were quite insightful as they highlighted how some teachers were using information on social media to develop new skills that enabled them to be more effective in the classroom:

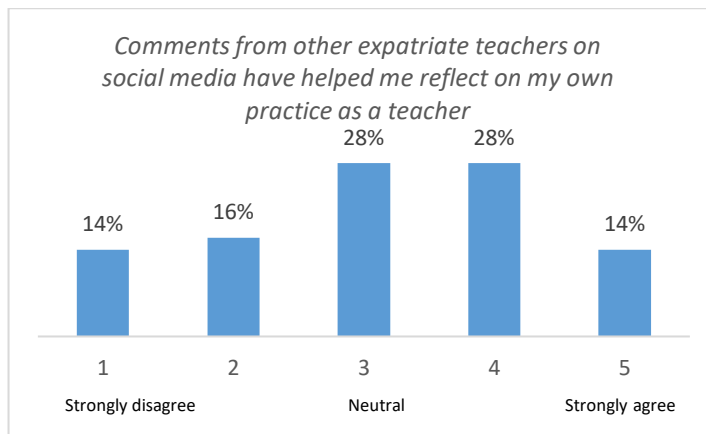
*The methods, different methods of teaching and er I cannot use the normal lecture method, or the normal way of teaching I was doing in India. So, I have to take on the more activity-oriented teaching and so I have a huge connection with social media now with this. [FG13]*

This echoes Whiting and Williams' (2013) findings that social media was used as a tool for self-education. Slightly more teachers (24%) either agreed or strongly agreed that information on social media supported their professional growth (Figure 4.42). The majority (40%), were neutral in their views regarding this, possibly indicating that either social media was not deemed effective in meeting this need or that they were not actively looking to grow professionally as expatriate teachers given the limited opportunities for career progression in this context. This could negatively influence retention given Cockburn's (2000) concern that even progression from teacher to school leader may not be sufficiently challenging for those with greater aspirations.



**Figure 4.42** Information on social media supporting my professional growth

In marked contrast to the above findings, 42% of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that comments from other expatriate teachers on social media helped them reflect on their own practice as a teacher (Figure 4.43).



**Figure 4.43** Self-reflection due to comments on social media

This suggests that while information on social media may not be considered valuable by some teachers in developing new skills or supporting professional growth, the comments from other teachers facilitated self-reflection by those reading them, which according to Hur and Brush (2009) is a benefit of online communities. According to Poom-Valickis and Mathews (2013, p.420) citing Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), 'A disposition for reflection and the skills among teachers has been associated with positive outcomes related to professional development'. Moreover, they add that 'The ongoing use of the process of reflection is essential for building knowledge, and increasing knowledge increases one's ability to use reflection effectively' (McAlpine and Weston, 2002; cited by Poom-Valickis and Mathews, 2013, p.420;).

It is worth noting that despite half of survey teachers possessing a Master's degree, only 14% agreed that social media enabled them to develop new skills, while 24% agreed that information on social media supported their professional growth. Social media therefore does not seem to positively influence professional development. Given that professional development has a positive influence on teacher retention (Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018), it could be argued that social media in this context, is not considered a platform that facilitates professional development by expatriate teachers.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In this chapter, the themes used to analyse the findings were identified based on the uses and gratifications identified in Chapter 2 and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A summary of the demography of the survey participants was provided together with how they used social media. Finally, the findings of the survey and the focus group interviews were analysed in relation to research questions initially identified in Chapter 1.

## **CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the findings from the previous chapter are discussed in relation to the reviewed literature. This study has confirmed the integral role of social media (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) in the lives of current and former expatriate teachers in AD. The discussion in this section is centred around the initial questions proposed in Chapter 1. An evaluation from a critical realist perspective is also conducted.

### **5.2 The influence of social media on recruitment**

While expatriate teachers primarily use recruitment websites to find out and apply for positions in schools in AD, the influence of social media during the recruitment period is noteworthy. The limited influence of social media on expatriate teachers' decision to seek in employment in AD is in sharp contrast to the role it plays once a teaching position has been offered. Social media plays a significant role for educators who have secured a teaching position and are either seeking reassurance about the validity of their offer, establishing the credibility of recruiters, or seeking further information about the next steps in the recruitment process. Social media enables them to establish what documents are required to finalise the recruitment process before moving to AD. Recognising that prospective recruits require information about the expatriation process, some recruiters proactively harness the power of social media as an information source by directing teachers to established expatriate teacher groups on social media. This not only facilitates the sharing of information on social media, but also indirectly improves the credibility of the recruiter. These established social media groups provide successful applicants the information they need while they wait for their expatriation. For some teachers, the absence of this information on social media may well have prevented them from moving to AD. With this in mind, the influence of social media on the recruitment of expatriate teachers is noteworthy due to the myriad of factors surrounding a move to a foreign country with a different cultural, social and educational landscape. The need to find out information from other prospective teachers or those already in AD mirrors the findings in Sheldon's (2015) research where university students used social media to engage with new and existing students during the application process. Therefore, the reassurances provided on social media by those already in the system or those committed to moving to AD has some influence on recruitment.

### **5.3 The influence of social media on retention**

The power social media gives users to access information (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) has positively influenced expatriate teacher retention. New expatriate teachers use social media to find information on visa requirements for dependents, connection to essential utilities and other aspects that enable them to effectively manage the transition from their home country to the host country. The information shared on social media by other expatriate teachers positively influences retention as the complex process of settling in is made less cumbersome through the sharing of information and experiences. The heavy reliance on social media by some expatriate teachers in AD is evident in this study.

#### *5.3.1 The importance of social media*

The importance of social media to some expatriate teachers working in AD is noteworthy. The sharp difference in the value that expatriate teachers attach to using social media for seeking employment, and for living in AD is noteworthy. Expatriate teachers clearly feel that social media is of more value to them during their time in AD. However, the difference in opinion between those currently in AD and those who have left is significant suggesting there are differing views on the influence of social media on retention between these two groups, but also highlighting, as indicated by Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013), the



complexity of a reality influenced by other mechanisms and conditions in critical realism. This could be attributed to the fact that there were significantly more former teachers who considered themselves advanced users of social media compared to current teachers and therefore felt strongly about the influence of social media on their life in AD. In addition, perspectives while recalling events may differ compared to when actually experiencing them, which could explain why former teachers may reflect more positively on the influence of social media than those currently employed given the day-to-day challenges they may be experiencing. This difference in perspective is acknowledged and perfectly valid in critical realism (Maxwell, 2012). For the majority of survey respondents, social media does not negatively influence their experiences in AD. In fact, participation in online communities as highlighted by Hur and Brush (2009), enables some expatriate teachers to overcome geographical isolation and feelings of loneliness.

### *5.3.2 Goal-directed use of social media*

Social media's ability to help people meet their goals and resolve any problems, practical or social (Humphreys, 2016), is evident in this research. The extent to which this is the case varies from teacher to teacher, and from one situation to another. The goal-directed nature of users to seek out specific gratifications (Orchard et al., 2014) was apparent in the focus group interviews. Expatriate teachers use social media to solve practical problems while in their home country and on arrival to AD. Professionally, social media enables teachers who are not familiar with the pedagogy required in this context to learn from other teachers and share resources. From a social perspective, social media enables expatriate teachers to establish meaningful relationships with other teachers in AD while concurrently maintaining relationships with family and friends in the home country. What is evident in the study is how the fulfilment of these needs enabled expatriate teachers to commit to a move to AD despite the potential challenges, and once in AD, settle and continue to use social media to support their intention to remain employed as teachers.

### *5.3.3 Network management using social media*

Given that missing family and friends is considered the most challenging aspect of moving to AD, social media usage helps moderate this challenge, enabling the majority of teachers to feel connected to friends and family in their home country. For expatriate teachers, the ability to maintain existing relationships with family and friends, network management (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016), is critical to their determination to remain employed in AD. This concurs with the assertion that the use of social media is largely driven by social needs and that social media facilitates the creation and maintenance of social relationships (Wang, Tchernev and Solloway, 2012) and the accompanying social gratification through interaction and communication (Quinn, 2016). Unlike Wang, Tchernev and Solloway's (2012) findings that social needs were not gratified by the use of social media, the results in this study concur with Whiting and Williams' (2013) findings that social needs, and more specifically, the need to maintain connections and communicate with family and friends is satisfied the most using social media. In other words, the gratification sought is obtained through the use of social media by expatriate teachers. These interactions reduce isolation on arrival to AD, enable expatriate teachers to feel connected to those in their home country, and keep up to date with family developments despite being geographically dispersed. This is facilitated in WhatsApp by what Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia (2016, p.895) describe 'as the near-real-time sharing of an event with rich media' which enables teachers 'to feel present in important life events'. Social media affordances such as the ability to receive pictures, voice and video messages of developments in the home country help expatriate teachers feel connected. Moreover, for some, the ability to establish new relationships on social media with those in similar situations to them, experiencing similar challenges, supports their intention to remain in AD as they are able to share experiences, and in some instances maintain these relationships offline. The ease of use of social media and the convenience associated with its use provides further gratifications for those connecting to family in different locations and time zones. From a critical realist perspective, the findings

reflect that knowledge is fallible (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2010) as the preconceptions held before this research was conducted, are refuted in the findings. The assumption was that expatriate teachers relied more on other expatriate teachers for social interaction and support. Instead, the maintenance of connections with family and friends on social media has a greater influence on retention, together with the support they provide.

#### *5.3.4 Active users of social media*

The active nature of users in selecting the media that fulfils their needs (Kink and Hess, 2008; Sheldon, 2015) with the way social media is used being based on demographic and personality traits (Sheldon, 2015) is apparent in this study. Expatriate teachers select how they use social media based on whether they need to maintain connections with family and friends, find out specific information, establish new relationships, share resources, deal with feelings of isolation on arrival to AD, or interact with other expatriate teachers. The affordances of social media, namely sharing, connecting and collaborating (Bosman and Zagenczyk, 2011), are realised in this study. Moreover, when specific social media does not meet their needs, or where comments on a social media platform are deemed negative, expatriate teachers actively remove themselves from these groups and move onto groups within platforms that they feel meet their needs or reflect their personality confirming Hargittai's (2008) view that the groups users belong to online reflect their networks in daily life. The findings in this study concur with Ferris and Hollenbaugh's (2018) assertion of users determining who and what is in their network, and highlights their rationality and self-awareness (Bracken and Lombard, 2001) together with their purposeful selection of media (Weiyan, 2015) based on their needs. This constant decision-making about how, when and what to use social media for, emphasises the active, rather than passive nature of expatriate teachers in managing how they use social media to meet their needs, a key emphasis in U&G. The selective and active nature of expatriate teachers in their use of social media facilitates their retention as they make conscious decisions to remove themselves from platforms or groups that may negatively influence their intention to remain employed in AD.

#### *5.3.5 Contributiveness on social media*

The preference to read about other expatriate teachers' experiences as opposed to sharing personal experiences highlights a disparity in reciprocity which may explain why expatriate teachers do not feel that information on social media helps them understand the requirements for teaching or prepares them for life in AD. The low contributiveness of expatriate teachers on social media is counter-productive to the facilities offered in social media of sharing and generating content. In fact, the more expatriate teachers read about others' experiences and reveal less about their own experiences, the greater the perceived inadequacy of social media in satisfying the content gratifications sought by expatriate teachers and possibly their intention to remain employed in AD if they do not feel that they can access the information they need to support their time in AD. Thus, echoing Leiner et al. (2018), for expatriate teachers to fully benefit from information on social media that supports their retention, there would need to be an intensive use of contribution features as opposed to consumption features while on social media. Currently, this is not the case.

#### *5.3.6 Concern, help and advice on social media*

The 'collegiality and trust' on social media that Mercieca and Kelly (2018, p.8) observed in their research, appears in this study to occur mainly between teachers in the same school due to sharing similar experiences and possibly established friendships. The use of social media to express concern, offer advice or help is greater with teachers in the same school than those across schools. Clearly, the time taken to build relationships with colleagues on a daily basis increases trust between teachers in the same school and thus their ability to express concern or offer advice through social media. However, for teachers who are part of social media groups that were established on arrival to AD, concern, advice and help are a regular feature as these groups have an established history of shared experiences.

Therefore, showing concern and offering advice is common across established groups on social media where users know each other personally and have shared similar experiences thus rooting their relationship. Indeed, good relationships facilitate problem-solving, enable teachers to provide support and reassurance to each other, and offer assistance during challenging times (Cockburn, 1996). Trust, an integral part of these relationships, facilitates ongoing expressions of concern and help when necessary. The sharing of experiences associated with these established groups positively influences expatriate teacher retention in AD given Hur and Brush's (2009) assertion that this enables teachers to feel that they are not alone in their experiences.

### *5.3.7 Facilitating cultural understanding using social media*

Despite the reviewed literature indicating that the cooperation and participation of parents and students positively influenced teacher retention (Hughes, 2012), this study did not establish the importance of social media in helping expatriate teachers develop an understanding of the cultural heritage of different stakeholders in their school. The language and cultural differences between expatriate teachers and stakeholders in the school including students, Arabic-speaking teachers and leaders, and parents; could be reduced if expatriate teachers had some understanding of these differences and were able to find common ground to facilitate effective communication. Furthermore, the desire to contribute to the community (Kim, 2000; cited by Sun et al., 2017) will be met once expatriate teachers are able to establish ongoing communication channels with non-English speaking colleagues and parents through social media, a practice that seems to be in its infancy. These ongoing communication channels would positively influence retention as asserted by Hughes (2012) given that 'playing a role in the community' (Kim, 2000; cited by Sun et al., 2017, p.768) is critical to self-actualisation.

## **5.4 Support through social media**

As the social and psychological characteristics of users influences their needs and how they satisfy these needs (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1973), the assertion by many teachers that social media has not negatively influenced their time in AD is noteworthy. Instead, and to a larger extent, social media enables expatriate teachers to receive support from friends and family in their home country and to a lesser extent, from other expatriate teachers in AD. Professional support from other teachers comes in the form of shared resources, advice on pedagogical instruction and assessment strategies. This mirrors Mercieca and Kelly's (2018) findings where ECTs shared resources and experiences. This support allays the initial anxieties and challenges associated with teaching in a new educational system, and the effects relocating has on self-confidence, teacher stress and health, and family harmony as indicated by Sharplin (2009) citing Churchill and Carrington (2000). Support from other teachers is 'necessary to facilitate the pedagogical and cultural adaptation' of expatriate teachers (Sharplin, 2009, p.203). Moreover, the contention that social support between colleagues minimises stress in the workplace (Cockburn, 2000) and thereby facilitates retention is evident in this study. It is worth noting, as indicated in critical realism, the differences in perceptions of reality (Maxwell, 2012) where some teachers feel that expatriate teachers share resources on social media while others disagree with this contention, thus indicating that support is experienced differently by each teacher according to their views and perspectives.

Support from family and friends in the home country enables expatriate teachers to express frustrations and share challenges they may be experiencing. With Ibrahim's (2012) contention that attrition in the first years of teaching was due to lack of support, this study highlights the positive influence of support on social media on expatriate teacher retention. Indeed, as previously stated, personal and professional support from other teachers is crucial in the initial years of teaching and therefore for retention (Dickson et al., 2014). Moreover, and again as previously highlighted, informational support and emotional support (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016), are critical to the retention of expatriate teachers, with

this study revealing the role of social media in enabling expatriate teachers to access these types of support. These findings echo those of Mercieca and Kelly (2018) where social media enabled teachers to provide and access the support that they needed in their initial years in a new role. Moreover, the identification and sharing of details of people already in post who can offer assistance to new teachers as recommended by Armitage and Powell (1997) is easily accommodated through social media to facilitate both emotional and informational support.

The support offered on social media to those new to the system and struggling to adapt to different expectations from school leaders, students and other stakeholders, positively influences expatriate teacher retention. Without this support, the determination to remain employed in AD may be reduced given Howe-Walsh and Schyns's (2010) assertion that expatriate teachers need support to make the necessary adjustments in their new context. The development of new skills through this support, for those new to AD, provides informal professional development which meets their individual needs in a safe environment free from performance appraisals or judgement of competence. This professional support, whether from colleagues within the school, or those outside the school, effectively provides new teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to be more effective in the classroom and thus as stated by Dickson et al. (2014), supports their retention. Unfortunately, the general unwillingness of expatriate teachers to improve their own or others' self-esteem either by sharing or acknowledging achievements and successes on social media somewhat limits the influence of support on teacher retention. This may be because social media is not deemed an appropriate medium for these exchanges possibly due to the negativity that some teachers feel is expressed on social media or the low levels of trust in this environment.

## **5.5 Social media literacy and its influence on expatriate teachers**

At this point, it is worth discussing how social media literacy influences expatriate teachers' experiences while using social media, and consequently, their recruitment and retention. Although online survey questions and focus group discussions did not explicitly refer to social media literacy or examine expatriate teacher's perception of their own competencies in this regard, responses to the questions in the online survey and focus group interviews give some indication of the competencies expatriate teachers demonstrate while using social media.

### *5.5.1 Minimising risk while using social media*

The contention that unlike non-literate users, social media literate users are less likely to be susceptible to content that may be unfavourable either by determining who they connect with, or what social media content they view (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020), is evident in this study. Expatriate teachers control admittance to grade-level and subject groups on social media by using questions related to their curriculum areas. In this context, the administrator for that group demonstrates technical competencies as they are able to filter out teachers who cannot answer questions pertinent to that group using advance privacy controls. The recognition that this is a necessary step to minimise the risk of spam or trolling demonstrates cognitive competence as indicated by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), due to choices being made about whose social media content is viewed and the critical evaluation of who to connect with in this environment. Once more, this highlights the active, rather than passive use of social media as indicated in U&G, for those expatriate teachers with group administration roles, and points to their determination to minimise risks and maximise opportunities by limiting interactions to those who are known, or who share common professional characteristics. Moreover, this behaviour highlights the affective competence of expatriate teachers in these groups as, taking guidance from Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), they are effectively controlling their emotional responses by minimising the risks of negative interactions on social media. In addition, their knowledge of the appropriateness of different content types for different audiences,

together with their use of advance privacy settings in social media to control what different connections can view (Trepte and Reinecke, 2011; cited by Schreurs and Vandebosch, 2020), further points to high levels of social media literacy in this situation. This active and selective nature in how social media is used is a key characteristic in U&G, and to a certain extent, minimises potentially negative comments from connections, a key aspect of social media literacy. By setting up groups on social media to engage in discussions and share curriculum related resources, expatriate teachers are to some extent facilitating their retention as these interactions and potential relationships may increase self-fulfilment and their perception of their personal effectiveness while delivering the curriculum.

### *5.5.2 Applying adaptive strategies while using social media*

Expatriate teachers who indicate that they remove themselves from groups on social media that they feel are negative, are, as pointed out by Schreurs and Vandebosch (2020), applying adaptive rather than maladaptive strategies 'when experiencing negative or positive emotions' while using social media. In this regard, they are manifesting, to some degree, social media literacy. More specifically, they are demonstrating cognitive competencies as indicated by (Livingstone, 2004; cited by Daneels and Vanwysberghe, 2017), by assessing and appraising the content on social media to determine whether it is relevant and thus successfully meets their needs and arguably, their intention to remain employed in AD. Put simply, whether the gratifications they are seeking are being satisfied. To a certain extent, expatriate teachers' recourse to their affective competencies through using their emotional state to influence how they behave as stated by Gagne (1984), which results in them departing from groups or social media platforms that are deemed too negative or that no longer serve their needs. Further, they draw attention to the active and goal-directed nature of social media users as highlighted in U&G, by moving in and out of groups as their needs change. This view, to some extent, confirms the contention that 'social media literacy can maximize the opportunities and minimize or even prevent the risks of social media use' (Schreurs and Vandebosch, 2020, p.2) in that expatriate teachers, by moving in and out of social media groups as their needs change, are maximising the opportunities on social media and minimising the risks. For expatriate teachers, literacy in this environment may arguably improve their experience of using social media and consequently, the level to which gratifications sought are obtained.

### *5.5.3 Managing interactions on social media*

Although Schreurs and Vandebosch, 2020 citing Trepte and Reinecke (2011) state that social media literate users' interactions on social media are with those they know rather than strangers, expatriate teachers engage in these interactions during their recruitment, and while they work in AD, as teachers they do not know may provide useful information that meets their needs. However, it is evident from the findings that these interactions are not always positive, and consequently, expatriate teachers make a concerted effort to disassociate themselves from these interactions, although it could be argued that by this point, the damage, in terms of effects on the emotional state, may have already been experienced. Therefore, the ability of social media literate users to 'intentionally pay little attention to potentially harmful content and more attention to potentially beneficial messages as they understand how they can be negatively vs positively affected by viewing certain posts' (Vraga et al., 2016; cited by Schreurs and Vandebosch, 2020, p.6), in other words, demonstrating cognitive competence, is critical to expatriate teachers. It is worth highlighting that these negative comments do not prevent the use of social media in the surveyed participants. Perhaps, the majority of expatriate teachers are not affected by negative comments on social media, or quite possibly, they demonstrate the requisite cognitive competencies that enable them to pay minimal attention to any negativity, and instead capitalise on the positive aspects of their interactions on social media. Another plausible explanation could be that expatriate teachers have limited experience of these negative comments due to their technical competencies which enable them to use advanced

privacy settings to limit interactions with unknown teachers or those who do not share common characteristics or beliefs.

#### *5.5.4 Contribution on social media*

Given that expatriate teachers indicate their preference to reading other teachers' posts about their experiences, compared to sharing their own experiences, the cognitive competencies of those who do not share on social media, or post negative content is questionable. According to Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), social media literate users who demonstrate high levels of cognitive structures empower themselves while using social media, and acknowledge their responsibility to other users when creating their posts. Thus, to demonstrate high levels of social media literacy from a cognitive perspective, expatriate teachers would need to recognise the value that other teachers seeking employment in AD, or working in AD might find in their posts and therefore share valuable information that supports fellow expatriates. Moreover, the fact that posts on social media do not prepare the majority of teachers for life in AD, nor does social media help them develop an understanding of teaching requirements or the cultural heritage of different stakeholders in AD, highlights that there is either limited appreciation of the role each expatriate teacher plays in supporting others, or that social media is not deemed the appropriate tool to share this valuable experience. Arguably, highly literate social media users would regularly engage in self-reflection while reading others' posts by recognising their role in posting balanced information about their experiences to improve the value of information on social media. Arguably, this would enable expatriate teachers to support those seeking employment and those looking to social media to support their retention prospects. Demonstrating high levels of social media literacy would maximise opportunities from interactions with social media content and minimise the risks associated with negative content (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020). Indeed, Vanwynsberghe and Verdegem (2013) contend that the positive outcomes offered by social media cannot be experienced by users who have limited or no knowledge and skills to produce content efficiently and effectively. While this might be a valid point, Nagle's (2018) contention that social media users should be able to withdraw their participation can be extended further to indicate that social media users have the autonomy to determine their level of participation and contribution. Hence, Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified Media-User Typology (MUT) as referenced in Chapter 2, can, to a certain degree, be used to establish levels of social media literacy based on how users engage with social media. However, although potentially insightful, determining levels of social media literacy based on media user type is beyond the scope of this study.

It is worth pointing out that this study does not establish whether expatriate teachers demonstrate, as indicated by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), social media literacy by exercising caution when creating and posting content to ensure that they acquire the emotions they wish to benefit from, thus demonstrating their technical and effective competence. On reflection, the questions in the online survey and the discussions in the focus groups were mainly centred around expatriate teachers as consumers of content rather than creators of content. Further, the survey highlights that expatriate teachers prefer to read about others' experiences rather than sharing their own experiences, making it even more difficult to establish whether they do indeed exercise caution when creating and posting content to meet their emotional needs. In addition, given that social media is not deemed to meet the esteem needs of the majority of expatriate teachers, there may be a missed opportunity for social media to enable expatriate teachers to meet this need if they maximise the opportunities with those they feel share the same views and outlook as they do, or are positive in what they post online.

## **5.6 Evaluation**

Social media has a minimal influence on expatriate teachers' decision to seek employment in AD. However, the findings highlight that it has some influence on expatriate teacher recruitment, and to a greater extent, expatriate teachers' intention to remain employed in

AD. Considering that in critical realism, reality is seen as an open and complex system (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013), it is evident that the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention differs from one teacher to another based on a wide variety of factors including demography and their individual needs at any given time. For example, while some teachers feel that social media helps them develop new skills, others do not share this view. In addition, expatriate teachers actively navigate their way around social media, moving in and out of groups and specific social media platforms as their needs change or when the gratifications sought are not obtained.

From a critical realist perspective, it is acknowledged that while this research combined qualitative and quantitative methods, it was not possible, as indicated Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013) to discern every facet of the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention, but rather, gain some understanding of it. At the empirical level of reality, expatriate teachers' perception of the influence of social media on recruitment and retention was assessed empirically using surveys and focus group interviews with expatriate teachers' experiences and interpretations influencing the results. At the real level of reality, the needs of expatriate teachers which they sought to satisfy through social media were examined, for example, the need to maintain connections and receive support from family and friends in the home country. At the actual level of reality, the findings provide some indication of what expatriate teachers perceive is the influence of social media on their recruitment and retention. However, this does not necessarily provide every detail as it is acknowledged that this is acceptable given that our knowledge is fallible. This was particularly evident in the focus group interviews when participants sometimes remembered events based on statements made by others, and not through their own recollection.

Critical realism's emphasis on understanding varied perspectives (Shannon-Baker, 2016) was facilitated in this study as data from both the online surveys and the focus group interviews revealed differences in viewpoints, but also illuminated shared experiences and outlooks. The findings reveal that the level of gratification obtained differs from teacher to teacher, despite possible similarities in needs, echoing Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2010) and Edgley et al.'s (2016) assertion that different results can be generated by the same causal powers. While focus group participants were asked to articulate how they perceived their use of social media would change, and the possible influence of this on their retention, it is acknowledged that from a critical realist perspective, the future cannot be predicted. Therefore, while they may continue to use social media, the gratifications sought may well differ as might the gratifications obtained. Clearly, the unique context that expatriate teachers work in plays a significant role in how social media is used to satisfy their needs confirming Bryman's (2016) view that consideration of the context is essential as it illuminates the conditions that foster or hinder the action of the causal mechanism, in this case, the needs of expatriate teachers.

## **5.7 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention based on the three broad questions posed at the beginning of this study. In addition, the extent to which expatriate teachers demonstrate social media literacy is discussed. Finally, the findings in the study were evaluated from a critical realist perspective.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis, the significance and strengths of the study are considered together with the success of the data collection methods in providing insight into the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD. The limitations of the study are described and the implications examined in terms of recruitment and retention. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for future studies are considered.

### 6.2 Significance and strengths of the study

This study makes a valuable contribution to the role that social media plays in the recruitment and retention of teachers. More specifically, it highlights the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers who have worked, or are still working in public schools in AD.

#### *6.2.1 Contribution to existing research*

Although previous research has explored the challenges of expatriate teacher recruitment (e.g. Armitage and Powell, 1997) and retention (e.g. Dos Santos, 2020; Hoang, 2020), this study has addressed the gap in the literature on how social media facilitates this process for those seeking teaching opportunities in foreign contexts and working outside their home country. Moreover, this study has shed light on the influence of social media on expatriate teacher retention given the challenges they face on arrival to the host country and during their tenure of employment. As global teacher migration increases (Bense, 2016), social media, given its ease of access and non-conformity to global boundaries remains a constant for those teaching in foreign contexts. This study has therefore highlighted how social media mitigates some of the challenges faced by expatriate teachers in AD during the recruitment process, transition to a new social, educational and cultural context, and the period in which they are employed.

The sharing of content, communicating and connecting with other people (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) that social media affords expatriate teachers in AD has been highlighted in this study from both a recruitment and retention perspective. Additionally, this study makes a valuable contribution to existing literature (e.g. Whiting and Williams, 2013; Karim et al., 2014; Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Bae, 2018; Ferris and Hollenbaugh, 2018) on the gratifications sought and obtained by users of social media. What distinguishes this inquiry from previous studies is the focus on the influence of social media on both the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD public schools. Most significantly, this study reveals that social media enables the majority of expatriate teachers to maintain and remain connected to family and friends in different geographical locations which ultimately influences their determination to remain employed in AD.

Although previous research from Armitage and Powell (1997) highlights the challenges of recruiting expatriate teachers, while Mercieca and Kelly (2018) examine the role of social media in supporting ECTs, the focus on expatriate teachers in this inquiry offers unique insights into how social media influences the recruitment and retention of those living and working in unfamiliar social, cultural and educational contexts. Moreover, this study contributes to existing research (e.g. Fox and Bird, 2017) on the value associated with online interactions which enable teachers to grow their networks both personally and professionally, and when necessary, benefit from shared resources and opportunities to develop professionally.

While research by Le Cornu (2013) emphasises the value of support from friends, family and colleagues to ECTs' determination to remain in teaching, this study, by highlighting the



critical role that social media plays in facilitating this support, adds a further need and motive for using social media and highlights the gratification that can be obtained through the use of social media. The emotional and informational support (Lin, Zhang and Li, 2016) that expatriate teachers gain to support their recruitment and retention through their interactions on social media confirms and further contributes to research on social media as a tool for support.

### *6.2.2 Research design strengths*

In light of the significance of this study, it is worth highlighting the strengths of this inquiry. This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to develop an in-depth understanding of the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Given that the use of one research method is viewed as a limitation (Gan and Wang, 2015), and the critical realist requisite for explanation (Easton, 2010), this study therefore capitalised on the strengths of each data collection method. The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was valuable for several reasons. Firstly, online surveys enabled greater breadth and scope in terms of the questions that were posed to participants. The qualitative method facilitated depth and the exploration of 'beliefs, values and motives' (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018, p.807) of expatriate teachers which enabled closer examination of key gratifications obtained from the use of social media indicated in the survey data. Secondly, use of online surveys enabled the exploration of the views of both current expatriate teachers across a range of schools and those who had left AD while the focus groups involved teachers who worked in one school and shared many experiences of using social media. Further, the findings from the first method of data collection were used to develop the questions for the second method and where necessary, counteract the limitations of the initial data collection process (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). Finally, the data collected in the online surveys was either confirmed or contradicted by comments in the focus group interviews which consequently provide the explanations that are necessary from a critical realist perspective.

### *6.2.3 Strength of theoretical framework*

Considering the criticisms levied at U&G regarding its lack of clarity in differentiating between needs, motives and gratifications (Weiss, 1976; Swanson, 1979; Alhabash and Ma, 2017), this study sought to address these concerns by using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as secondary framework through which further needs of expatriate teachers could be established. This approach provided the foundation through which the gratifications sought and obtained by expatriate teachers could be more closely examined, explained and understood. U&G, provided a framework to examine how social media fulfilled the needs (Smock et al., 2011) of expatriate teachers from both a practical and social perspective while Maslow's hierarchy of needs expanded on needs not necessarily considered in U&G. With consideration of the critical realist stance taken in this study, the causal mechanisms and the resulting explanations were more clearly explained.

### *6.2.4 Addressing the research questions*

The themes used for data analysis in Chapter 4 (Table 4.1) were derived from both the conceptual model proposed in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2) and further needs identified from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This enabled the findings of the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to be analysed using established theories related to the use of social media. Furthermore, the combination of the findings from the online surveys and focus groups, as opposed to separate reporting provided the rich descriptions that quantitative data alone is not able to offer thus providing the explanations essential in critical realism. In addition, emphasis on understanding different perspectives and expressing varied assertions (Shannon-Baker, 2016), and recognising the role that context plays in illuminating the conditions that foster or hinder the action of the causal mechanism as indicated by Bryman (2016) as postulated in critical realism was essential to understanding the influence of SM on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention. Table 6.1 highlights

how the research questions were addressed and how this linked to the theoretical framework and the theoretical position taken in this study.

**Table 6.1** Addressing the research questions

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Data collection methods</b>	<b>Data analysis</b>	<b>Links to theoretical framework</b>	<b>Link to theoretical position</b>
<b>How does social media influence expatriate teachers' decision to seek employment in the UAE?</b>	Online surveys	Univariate analysis	Gratifications sought  Gratifications obtained	3 levels of reality: Empirical – subject to human experience and explanation;  Actual – events occurring whether observed or not;  Real – causal mechanism causing events to occur.  Transitive and intransitive domains of knowledge.
<b>What is the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment in Abu Dhabi?</b>	Online surveys Focus groups	Univariate analysis  Thematic analysis	Types of gratifications (gratifications obtained)	Existence of a world independent of our views and perceptions.  Emphasis on understanding different perspectives and expressing varied assertions.
<b>What influence does social media have on expatriate teachers' intention to remain employed in Abu Dhabi schools?</b>	Online surveys Focus groups	Univariate analysis  Bivariate analysis  Thematic analysis	Gratifications sought  Gratifications obtained  Self-esteem  Self-actualisation	Different perspectives, all perfectly valid.  World is perceived as being laden with theory but not determined by theory.  Different results can be generated by the same causal power.  Different gratifications may be derived from using the same social media platform.  Knowledge is temporary as the absolute truth cannot be directly accessed.  An action will not always result in the same outcome.  Context illuminates the conditions that foster or hinder the action of the causal mechanism.

### *6.2.5 Breadth, scope and depth*

While the online survey provided breadth in terms of questions that could be asked, focus group interviews provided the necessary explanations required in critical realism. Specific areas could be discussed in depth and at length with a further advantage of interviewees benefiting from comments made by their peers through collective remembering as indicated by Wilson (1997, p.214-15) citing Kitzinger (1994). Responses from the online surveys guided discussions in the focus groups with participant comments either confirming or refuting findings from the survey. Familiarity between focus group participants and the researcher facilitated a relaxed environment that enabled even reticent interviewees to express their opinions, sometimes due to encouragement from their peers.

### *6.2.6 Diversity in sample*

Data from the online surveys highlighted the perspectives of both teachers who were still employed in AD and those who had left. This meant that the views presented experiences from a diverse population of teachers from different countries with varied levels of experience both in AD and in their home country. The analysis of the findings made some distinction between the views of current and former AD teachers highlighting significant differences in the influence of social media on expatriate teacher retention on these two groups. The initial expectation had been that approximately 25 teachers would complete the online survey but the oft cited power of social media to encourage the participation of a wider group of respondents who were no longer working in AD was harnessed through snowball sampling.

### *6.2.7 Links between critical realism and U&G*

Throughout this study, consideration was given to the theoretical position and the chosen theoretical framework. Determination of the methodology, data analysis and reporting of the findings was considered from a critical realist stance. A conceptual model (see Figure 3.1) was proposed to illustrate the relationship between U&G and the three levels of reality as posited in critical realism. Thus, the theoretical framework and theoretical position were not viewed as independent constructs, but rather, complementary in this study and critical to understanding how social media influenced the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Moreover, consideration was given to the compatibility of the chosen methodology and the theoretical stance taken in this study which highlighted that the choice of mixed methodology was not an isolated occurrence, but rather influenced by the critical realist stance taken throughout this study. Further, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods illuminated different perspectives and their validity (Shannon-Baker, 2016) as acknowledged in critical realism, given the complexity of a multi-layered reality with different levels of abstraction which therefore required different methods to understand its complexity (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). The theoretical framework provided the basis for data collection by influencing the questions that were posed in the survey, and consequently, the focus group discussions. Both U&G and Maslow's hierarchy of needs influenced the questions posed in the online survey, and consequently, the analysis of the data. The method chosen for analysing the qualitative data, thematic analysis, was determined by the theoretical stance taken in this study together with the theoretical framework which facilitated the discovery of relationships and repetitions in the data as indicated by Clarke and Braun (2017). Decisions made throughout the study were therefore considered in light of the theoretical framework chosen and the theoretical stance of the researcher.

### *6.2.8 Links between social media literacy and U&G*

Discussions in the previous chapter surrounding the social media literacy competencies that expatriate teachers demonstrated while using social media to support their recruitment and retention provided some insight into how they navigated the risks associated with using social media. While social media literacy was not explicitly referred

to in the online survey and the focus groups, and therefore unidentifiable to the teachers themselves, their responses to how they dealt with negative interactions or content on social media that did not support their recruitment or retention not only highlighted their social media literacy levels, but also pointed to the requirement for further development of these competencies. As postulated in critical realism, the varying social media literacy competencies demonstrated by expatriate teachers facilitated an understanding of the different perspectives and varied assertions of the participants. Moreover, the discussions around social media literacy highlighted the active, goal-directed and selective nature of some expatriate teachers while they used social media to support their recruitment and retention. Further, from a U&G perspective, their rationality and self-awareness as indicated by Bracken and Lombard (2001) aligns with social media literacy where, as highlighted by Livingstone (2004) cited by Daneels and Vanwynsberghe (2017), users assess and appraise the content while engaging with other social media users. Therefore, this study has highlighted that U&G and social media literacy can be viewed as complementary as it could be argued that users who are active, rational, self-aware, goal-directed and selective in their use of social media possess to a greater or lesser extent, social media literacy competencies which enable them to, as stated by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), minimise the risks associated with the use of social media while maximising the opportunities it affords. In addition, and taking guidance from Ferris and Hollenbaugh (2018) with reference to U&G and building on the active-user perspective, the creation of content requires technical competencies, while choosing who and what is in expatriate teachers' network relies on both technical and cognitive competencies. Interacting and influencing other users depends, to some extent, on affective competencies. Based on the discussions in Chapter 5, it is suggested therefore that the more social media literate a user is, the more likely they are to satisfy the gratifications sought due to proficiency in terms of technical, cognitive and affective competencies.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

While there were illuminating insights into the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD, it is worth highlighting the limitations of this inquiry.

#### *6.3.1 Generalization of findings*

Echoing similar views to those of Leiner et al. (2018), caution should be exercised with generalization of the findings of this study due to the use of convenience sampling in the focus groups. The use of snowball sampling in the online surveys further limited generalization as teachers were selected according to the networks of expatriate teachers rather than randomly, which may have minimised bias (Bae, 2018). It cannot be assumed that the views of the expatriate teachers surveyed and interviewed reflect those of the general expatriate teacher population in AD public schools. As indicated by Smock et al. (2011), the use of non-probability sampling limits the generalizations of the results of this study to other populations. In summary, and taking guidance from Phua, Jin and Kim (2017), a larger and more diverse expatriate teacher population across age, gender and ethnicity would increase external validity so that results could be applied across a wider social media using expatriate teacher population.

#### *6.3.2 Gender differences*

The views of an equal ratio of the male to female expatriate teacher population were not obtained and therefore not analysed. This may have provided an interesting perspective given reported differences in uses and gratifications between men and women, where women used social media to observe the life of their family and friends while men used it to meet new people and to network (Stanley, 2015; cited by Alhabash and Ma, 2017). This concurs with Muscanell and Guadagno's (2012, p.110) findings 'that women were more oriented towards activities that facilitate relationship maintenance compared to men' while men use SNSs for networking and establishing relationships. Moreover, the findings in the

research conducted by Noguti, Singh and Waller (2016, p.42) which indicate 'that females are more likely to use online resources such as social media for purposes other than social engagement, i.e. to find information' might have resulted in different findings in this study had more men participated. Although the majority of participants regularly read about other expatriate teachers' experiences, only a minority felt that information on social media helped them understand the teaching requirements in AD, and the cultural heritage of different stakeholders. It might well be that had more men participated in the study, these findings might have differed. Indeed, Humphreys (2016) citing Broadhurst (1993) indicates that 'women post fewer messages in discussion groups' and are 'less persistent in online discussions' which might explain why the majority of survey participants did not feel that social media met their information needs given the large proportion of female respondents and gender differences highlighted by Humphreys (2016). This suggests that the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of male and female expatriate teachers would differ given the reported differences in how they use social media. The use of quota sampling, where an equal number of male and female participants were sought, may have enabled the researcher to explore these gender differences and report findings that further contribute to existing literature in this area of research.

### *6.3.3 Social media platforms*

As this study looked at social media as a whole, and did not distinguish between the gratifications sought and those obtained between different platforms, for example, Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, it remains unclear whether different gratifications were obtained by expatriate teachers using different platforms. Indeed, Alhabash and Ma (2017) citing Stanley (2015) found in their study different use motivations for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat; which suggests that the subsequent gratifications obtained would also differ. Moreover, Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia (2016) found that users had different experiences when using Facebook compared to WhatsApp. Although the purpose of this study was not to explore the influence of different social media platforms on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention, this distinction may have yielded unique results as there are clear variations between how individuals use different platforms and how 'the strength of each gratification differs to varying degrees across the use of different social media' (Gan, 2018, p.145). The examination of differences in gratifications sought and obtained from different social media platforms would extend to gender preferences within these platforms given Noguti, Singh and Waller's (2016) emphasis on gender differences in usage of different platforms. Admittedly, equal participation between men and women would facilitate the analysis of the findings to assess how these social media preferences influenced expatriate teacher recruitment and retention.

### *6.3.4 Personality traits*

Although consideration was given to expatriate teachers' demographic information, for example age and gender, details of each individual's personality were not established which may have resulted in different conclusions given Bae's (2018) contention that the personality traits of individuals may bridge the gap between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. Although there were similarities in terms of reasons for coming to the UAE, the influence of social media on individuals would most likely differ according to their personality and how they dealt with change and uncertainty. Admittedly however, personalities are difficult to compare due to the dearth of literature in this area (Orchard et al., 2014). However, consideration of more comparable factors such as economic stability of the home country could have influenced the motivations for using social media and the resultant gratifications obtained given Phua, Jin and Kim's (2017, p.121) assertion that participants 'socioeconomic status, may have a significant effect on frequency of SNS use'.

### *6.3.5 Data collection methods*

Given that focus group interviews highlighted that expatriate teachers differentiated between teachers within their school and those in other schools in terms of seeking advice

and encouragement on social media, it would have been insightful to distinguish survey questions according to in-school and out of school teachers. Grouping expatriate teachers into one homogenous group in the survey questions did not reveal the differences in terms of trust, communication and relationships on social media. Survey findings might have revealed differences in perspective based on whether questions related to expatriate teachers working in the same school, or a different school to the survey participant. Conducting a shorter follow-up survey that focused specifically on these differences may have provided further illumination into the influence of social media on expatriate teacher retention. Moreover, it would have provided the explanations that are necessary in critical realism and possibly emphasised the importance of trust and relationship building for expatriate teachers navigating the challenges of working in a different context.

To further explain the findings of the survey, a third focus group could have been conducted consisting of teachers from different subjects which may have provided different insights into how social media influenced expatriate teacher recruitment and retention. Responses from the two focus groups that were conducted were with teachers in the same school teaching the same subject. The discussions in these groups may have therefore been biased based on several factors. Firstly, participants may have been reluctant to express views that were different to the group due to not wanting to deviate from the group consensus on the influence of social media due to pre-existing relationships and friendships. Secondly, teachers who were considered more vocal or more experienced may have controlled the direction of the discussions without the researcher realising the power dynamics in these groups. A third group consisting of expatriate teachers across different subjects may have limited dominance by participants such as subject coordinators or expatriate teachers with more experience in this context. According to Ayrton (2019, p.324), interactions in focus groups are not neutral, but rather 'shaped by and revealing of the power relations that exist between group members'. In the discussions that occur in focus groups, 'participants lay claim to power, surrender it, confer it on others, negotiate its bases, harness its dynamics to strengthen a rhetorical purpose, and reinforce or question its corporate experience' Ayrton (2019, p.336). Therefore, while the power relations were not obvious to the researcher, they might, as indicated by Ayrton (2019), have influenced the data that the groups produced. A third focus group with teachers from different subject might have allowed participants to reflect on their own experiences of using social media relative to expatriate teachers from other subjects, with less focus on departmental experiences. Additionally, the power relations between subject coordinators and their teachers would be mitigated although it is acknowledged that power may have been exerted in other ways during the interactions.

The motivations and gratifications for using social media that were offered in the online survey were based on those indicated in the reviewed literature. This according to Smock et al. (2011) may have prevented participants from expressing other motivations and gratifications that had not been posited in previous research. Furthermore, differences in perceptions of using social media and how it is actually used (Smock et al., 2011) through the use of diaries (Bryman 2016) or 'social monitoring programs' (Phua, Jin and Kim, 2017, p.121) would provide valuable insight into the time expatriate teachers actually spent on social media and the effect this had on the gratifications obtained. This would provide a more realistic indication of how social media influences teachers' intention to remain employed in AD public schools given Alhabash and Ma's (2017) contention that self-reporting is unreliable as it relies on recollection. Therefore, the subjective as opposed to objective nature of participants' perceptions of their use of social media (Phua, Jin and Kim, 2017), would be moderated. Alternatively, taking guidance from Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia (2016), focus group participants could have been asked to recall a single memorable event on social media that they believed significantly influenced their recruitment and retention, rather than their typical use of social media. This would have, according to Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia (2016), offered several advantages. Firstly, it would have prompted focus group participants' memories to describe in detail how social

media influenced either their recruitment or retention, therefore providing the explanations that are necessary from a critical realist perspective. Secondly, it would have minimised the bias or inaccuracies associated with recollection as seen in Focus Group 1. Finally, focussing on a single experience, whether positive or negative, may have provided a unique viewpoint to the study of the experiences of users (Karapanos, Teixeira and Gouveia, 2016) with social media and how it fulfils expatriate teachers' needs in relation to recruitment and retention.

#### *6.3.6 Social media literacy in research design*

Given the benefits of social media literacy among social media users, questions pertaining to expatriate teachers' social media literacy and competencies may have provided insights into how expatriate teachers navigated the negativity that some felt was prevalent in some social media interactions. More specifically, questions relating to the three competencies associated with social media literacy would have provided insight into how expatriate teachers viewed their cognitive, technical and affective competencies influenced the gratifications obtained while using social media during the recruitment process. Furthermore, once employed, establishment of the influence of these competencies on how expatriate teachers decoded and evaluated the content on social media to support communication in this environment and their intention to remain employed in AD would have been valuable. Although the discussions in the previous chapter considered the social media competencies that expatriate teachers demonstrated while using social media based on survey findings and discussions in the focus groups, a further method of data collection would have provided the explanations necessary in critical realism. To this end, and taking guidance from Bryman (2016), focus group participants could have been asked to record their social media interactions and the competencies they demonstrated while using social media in a diary. A clear description of each competence and examples of how this would be evident while using social media would have served two purposes. Firstly, it would have enabled participating expatriate teachers to understand and apply social media literacy competencies that enabled them to, as indicated by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), minimise the risks associated with interactions with social media content and maximise the opportunities that supported their retention. Secondly, it would have provided rich descriptions of expatriate teachers' social media literacy levels and how this influenced the gratifications they obtained while using social media. Finally, and most importantly, the use of diaries as a third method of data collection would, if guidance is taken from Newby (2014), have improved the validity and reliability of the findings through triangulation, and as stated by Bryman (2016), verified the results of the survey and focus groups. The data recorded in the diaries could have been analysed to identify themes specific to social media literacy and thus shed more light into how social media literacy influences the retention of expatriate teachers during their use of social media. The use of diaries would have reduced concerns with self-reporting, as indicated in the previous paragraph, as expatriate teachers would be recording their interactions with other social media users and content as they occurred, and thus rely less on the recollection that was required in both the survey and the focus groups. However, diaries can be onerous on research participants, and as indicated by Bryman (2016), may result in participants either not recording as much detail as time progresses, or not recording their activities at all due to insufficient time or lack of motivation to continue. Allocation of a short time frame for data collection using diaries would address these concerns.

### **6.4 Implications of the study**

The power of social media has been harnessed to change political opinion, address social problems and influence shopping habits and trends. It seems that its strength to influence teachers is yet to be realised in education, particularly with reference to the recruitment and retention crisis that is faced in some contexts. Given the widespread use of social media, its use as a tool to support teachers in an increasingly high-stakes educational environment that expects teachers to have broader roles (OECD, 2005), is worth acknowledging. The

current levels of teacher attrition cannot be deemed sustainable and therefore measures need to be taken to increase the gratifications obtained by teachers who turn to social media for, amongst other things, support, social interaction or information sharing.

#### *6.4.1 Recruitment implications*

For those tasked with ensuring schools are fully staffed in a challenging educational era, ensuring that social media provides not only the necessary information for prospective teachers, but also details of experiences of those already in post, is critical to minimising the percentage of teachers who do not make the final commitment to move to the host country. It could also be argued that social media plays a critical role for those who are unsure about whether to apply for positions outside their home country as information on social media could provide details of the experiences of those in post to dispel any misconceptions or fears that prospective applicants may have. Policy makers and those responsible for recruiting teachers for public schools should consider how social media is used to attract teachers to specific locations as this can have significant bearing on expatriate teachers' intention to seek employment in countries outside their home country. Indeed, Chandler (2010, p.224) contends 'that schools, particularly those in the Middle East, might benefit from emphasizing more strongly the attractions of their locations to potential applicants'. Once recruited, social media can be used to support expatriate teachers early in their transition, and once they have settled, mitigate some of the challenges associated with living and working in a foreign context. This is in light of the contention by Borman and Maritza Dowling (2008) that there is limited evidence of initiatives being employed to address the ongoing problem of teacher attrition.

Given the secondary role that social media plays during the recruitment of expatriate teachers, this study has revealed its complementarity to recruitment websites during the recruitment process. For policy makers and those tasked with recruiting expatriate teachers in AD, successful recruitment and expatriation relies to a larger extent on recruitment websites, with social media playing a supportive role in ensuring the take up of positions in AD. While social media alone will not reduce attrition, this study has drawn attention to how it influences the retention of expatriate teachers. Different factors affect the retention of expatriate teachers given the unique contexts that they live and work in, away from their family and friends. For policy makers, the importance of recognising the influence of maintaining these connections on expatriate teacher retention in AD is critical to ensuring that teaching in AD is not seen as a short-term opportunity, but rather a long-term commitment.

The warranting value (Hayes and Carr, 2015; cited by Carr, 2016) of recruiters and prospective employers could be increased using social media. Recruiters and school leaders could direct prospective teachers to blogs and teacher groups where positive experiences are shared which would increase expatriate teacher motivation to seek and secure employment in AD. However, moderation of these blogs or groups would need to be balanced so that experiences that are shared are not removed if they are deemed negative, but rather, ideas suggested to improve negative experiences or resolve issues teachers may be experiencing through open and transparent dialogue between recruiters or potential employers and prospective teachers.

#### *6.4.2 Retention implications*

Considering that emphasis should be placed on retaining teachers instead of increasing teacher numbers to meet the needs of schools (Cobbold, 2015), the role of social media in this endeavour is noteworthy given its widespread use in today's digital era. Those responsible for professional development in schools should consider how to use social media to support the professional growth and development of new skills of expatriate teachers. This could reduce the oft considered short-term nature of expatriate teaching posts and allow educators to commit to longer-term deployment in AD given Bense's (2016,



p.45) contention that ‘international teacher migration and mobility are increasing and issues of professional support’ are affecting host countries. The formal establishment of teacher networks as recommended by Bense (2016) could therefore be implemented through social media by teachers themselves or by those tasked with the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. This would satisfy Bense’s (2016) call for policies and practices that assist the transition of teachers into the host country’s system through effective preparation and support. She surmises that:

the success of teacher migration for receiving countries is also closely related to migrant teachers’ effectiveness in school. This once more underlines the importance of effective professional support programs to ensure a successful outcome for both, migrant teachers as well as the receiving country. (p.47)

Although Bense’s (2016) review of the literature focuses on migrant teachers, the views expressed are pertinent to expatriate teachers given that they too have relocated to a new country with a different cultural and educational context, albeit temporarily.

#### *6.4.3 Contextual implications*

To overcome the challenges of working in a new school system, school leaders and local authorities should consider using social media to share contextually relevant pedagogical strategies to support those coming from different educational contexts. Moreover, providing details of curriculum content and assessment strategies on social media where questions and answers can be posted, may allay some of the anxieties that newly recruited expatriate teachers may have as they will have an understanding of the educational context they will be working in and the resources that they can tap into to make their induction more successful and hence their determination to remain employed in AD. Moreover, the limited understanding of local stakeholders by expatriate teachers could be remedied using social media as a platform to celebrate cultural differences and share expectations from both the teachers’ and stakeholders’ perspective. Indeed, the ability communicate despite language differences on social media was highlighted in the focus groups, and if harnessed, could improve expatriate teachers’ determination to remain employed in AD as reliance on a third-party intermediary would be minimised, thus enabling direct engagement with parents.

#### *6.4.4 Implications for technology-rich countries*

The implications of this study for other countries with high rates of social media penetration (see Figure 1.1) such as South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, are worth highlighting. Given the recruitment drives by international schools in South Korea ‘to attract qualified teachers and education professionals’ (Dos Santos, 2020, p.2), the harnessing of social media in this and other contexts with similar approaches to support these endeavours is noteworthy. From a national perspective, policy makers in these countries should consider harnessing the affordances of social media to support the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. The use of social media to provide information pertinent to the role of expatriate teachers and the various stakeholders they will interact with, coupled with details of the educational goals of the government will provide the details that expatriate teachers need to make informed decisions about their relocation. Further, establishing social media platforms in governmental departments that are related to visa and private health systems and matters pertaining to accommodation and essential utilities will provide the necessary support for expatriation. At school level, educational leaders can use social media to share curriculum, pedagogical and assessment systems, career progression opportunities, and support mechanisms relevant to that context so that expatriate teachers are fully conversant with the educational landscape of the host country. Moreover, social media can be harnessed by school leaders to engage in discussions and dialogue with prospective teachers so that questions pertinent to their

roles can be posed and responded to, to supplement blogs from other expatriate teachers working in that context. The establishment of links with those responsible for mentoring, induction and professional development of expatriate teachers by school leaders will enable potential employees to establish a point of contact prior to commencing their role, and provide the necessary reassurances that will support both the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers. Finally, a forum on social media that encourages the sharing of achievements and celebrates success will enable expatriate teachers to fulfil their self-esteem needs in a positive and encouraging environment to further support expatriate teacher recruitment and their determination to stay in the host country once employed.

#### *6.4.5 Social media literacy implications*

For those tasked with inducting and training expatriate teachers, the value of developing social media literacy in educators together with other pedagogical and curriculum training needs during tenure in the host country should not be ignored. The role of social media literacy competencies in minimising the risks associated with using social media and maximising the opportunities it affords (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020) is critical for expatriate teachers in technology rich countries such as the UAE, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore where expatriate teachers are regularly recruited to teach in both international and government schools, and where social media use is part and parcel of life in these contexts. Indeed, equipping expatriate teachers with the competencies to navigate and balance the complexities of social media will enable them as social media literate users to 'know that they will not be able to get all benefits out of their social media experiences when posting too little positive information whereas posting too much information brings along enormous privacy risks' (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2020, p.11-12). In light of this, the ability to recognise what information to share on social media to benefit themselves and other expatriate teachers, in other words, cognitive competencies, coupled with the technical competencies that enables the selection of appropriate social media platforms and the application of advanced privacy controls to manage what different users see. In addition, affective competencies to manage emotions while using social media, all contribute to a positive experience on social media that supports expatriate teachers' retention.

### **6.5 Recommendations**

While this study has investigated the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in public schools in AD, it is recommended that future studies explore the differences between expatriate teachers in private schools and those in public schools in the same context given the different challenges each group may face. Notably, consideration should be given to the influence of school culture, leadership and management, school funding and curricula on expatriate teacher use, motivations and gratifications obtained from social media and how this influences their retention.

#### *6.5.1 Recruitment and retention factors*

Whereas this study concentrated on the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD, it is recommended that future studies explore other factors that influence the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in this context. Although this study highlighted some of the reasons for expatriate teachers seeking employment in AD, consideration was not given to all the possible reasons for this venture. Moreover, once recruited, this study did not explore other factors that influenced the retention of expatriate teachers in AD as this was beyond the scope of this inquiry. Extant literature has focused specifically on factors that influence the retention of locally trained teachers working in familiar cultural, educational and social contexts (e.g. Cockburn, 2000; Hughes 2012; Ingersoll and Collins, 2012; Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill, 2012; Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Faremi, 2017; Geiger and Pivovaroava, 2018; See et al., 2020). There appears therefore to be a paucity of research into whether the same factors would have a bearing on those teaching in foreign contexts. Further research into this area

may shed light on how policy makers and those responsible for recruiting expatriate teachers in contexts such as AD can retain their teaching labour force given the challenges associated with retaining teachers in local contexts and the related attrition rates and shortages seen in contexts such as the US, England, South Africa and Ghana.

### *6.5.2 Support mechanisms for expatriate teachers*

It is recommended that future studies build on this study and that of Mercieca and Kelly (2018) by exploring specifically the influence of support mechanisms in social media environments for expatriate teachers both from school leaders and those tasked with mentoring and developing new teachers. Indeed, See et al. (2020) surmise from their recent review of extant literature on interventions that positively influence recruitment and retention that the support that teachers are offered in schools at the beginning of their career and during their tenure in the form of continuing professional development may be beneficial to retention. More specifically, future studies may look at how social media can be harnessed to support expatriate teachers during their induction, mentoring and professional development experiences to positively influence their recruitment and retention.

### *6.5.3 Theoretical framework*

U&G was used as a theoretical lens to examine the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in AD public schools. This could be considered the springboard for future research which considers how interpersonal and mass media communication theories such as uncertainty reduction theory, social exchange theory and agenda-setting theory (Sheldon, 2015) tie in with the gratifications sought and obtained in U&G. Exploration through these theoretical perspectives may provide a framework in which to examine the uses and gratifications obtained from using social media to mitigate some of the criticisms levied at U&G by those who do not consider it a theory, but rather a research strategy (Weiss, 1976), a methodology (Bracken and Lombard, 2001), an approach (Swanson, 1979) or a framework (Al-Jabri, Sadiq Sohail and Ndubisi, 2015). Indeed, Kink and Hess's (2008) contention that U&G is 'not one monolithic theory' but rather one that it has been influenced by various fields and as such is still evolving is worthy of consideration under the umbrella of mass media and interpersonal communication theories.

### *6.5.4 U&G and social media literacy*

Future research may also consider how expatriate teachers' social media literacy and competencies influence how they analyse and interpret message content in social media to support their recruitment and retention. This is in light of the contention by Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020, p.5) that as social media literate 'users have a thorough understanding of the negative effects that one's own behaviors and certain content types of others could trigger, they are in control of their affective responses towards these behaviors and contents' and are therefore able to adapt and regulate negative emotions when they do occur. Therefore, future research that examines how these behaviours while using social media influence the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers given the emphasis on the active, selective and goal-directed nature of social media users as indicated in U&G. The focus of future research may therefore be the influence of social media literacy while using social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers given Schreurs and Vandenbosch's (2020) argument that social media literate users are more likely to experience stronger effects from interacting with content that activates positive results due to their cognitive and affective competencies continually supporting them to fully benefit from their experiences in social media.

### *6.5.5 Technological advancements*

While the findings of this study relate to the gratifications obtained by expatriate teachers through the use of social media at this point, it cannot be assumed that these findings would

be consistent if the same study was conducted in the future given Orchard et al.'s (2014) contention of the rapid pace of change in how social media is developing and hence, how it is used. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that expatriate teachers' needs will remain static given the constant changes in social, technological, and economic climate in both the home country and the country of expatriation. Future studies would therefore need to consider the role of social media within this ever-evolving technological environment given Edgley et al.'s (2016) contention of the temporal nature of knowledge and our inability to predict the future in critical realism.

## **6.6 Summary**

This chapter has considered the implications of this study with reference to extant literature on social media uses and gratifications as well as teacher recruitment and retention. The strengths and limitations of the study have been described together with recommendations and suggestions for future studies relating to expatriate teachers and their use of social media. The insights offered in this research will go some way to explaining how social media can be used to improve teacher recruitment and retention in the high-stakes educational climate that prevails in educational discourse.

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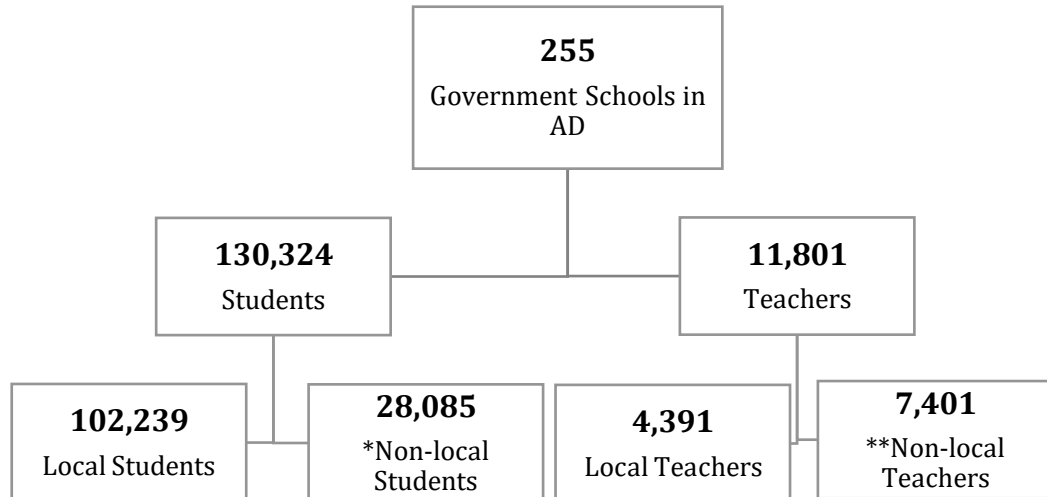
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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – Context Data

### Student and Teacher Population in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in 2015

Source: MOE (2015)



*\*Students from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (consisting of 6 countries, namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE), Arab countries and other countries.*

*\*\*Teachers from the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) and other countries such as South Africa, Ireland, England, Canada and the US.*

## APPENDIX B - Uses and Gratification Themes for Using Social Media

Uses and Gratification Theme	Percentage of Respondents	Description
Social interaction	88	Interaction with friends, family and work colleagues which in some instances was greater on social media than in person.
Information seeking	80	Finding information about products, deals, events and businesses as well as for education.
Pass time	76	To while away time when there is nothing else to do or when bored at work or in class.
Entertainment	64	Playing games, listening to music and watching videos.
Relaxation	60	Taking the user's mind off things or to escape reality.
Expressions of opinions	56	Making comments on postings and updates, anonymous expressions of opinion, opportunity to criticise other or express frustrations.
Communicatory utility	56	Social media provides a subject or topic for discussion.
Convenience utility	52	Readily available with no time constraints, ability to communicate with multiple people at any one time.
Information sharing	40	Sharing information by posting updates, uploading pictures, marketing and advertising businesses.
Surveillance/knowledge about others	32	Watching things or other people.

Source: Whiting and Williams (2013)



## APPENDIX C - Focus Group Interview Schedule

	<b>Focus Group 1</b>	<b>Focus Group 2</b>
<b>Day</b>	Thursday	Sunday
<b>Date</b>	27/06/2019	30/06/2019
<b>Time</b>	9.00am-10.00am	9.00am-10.00am
<b>Number of Participants</b>	4	5
<b>Group Activity</b>	10 minutes	10 minutes
<b>Focus Group Interview – fixed questions</b>	40 minutes	40 minutes
<b>Focus Group Interview – variable questions</b>	10 minutes	10 minutes

## APPENDIX D - Online Survey Questions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Your contribution to this inquiry is valuable in providing an insight into the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers like you.

1. Are you male or female? *(please tick one)*

Male

Female

2. Please select your age category

20 – 29

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 – 59

60 – 65

3. Which country do you come from? *(please tick one only)*

England

India

Ireland

South Africa

Wales

USA

4. How many years of teaching experience did you have before moving to the UAE? *(please indicate in whole numbers e.g. 5)*

\_\_\_\_\_ years

5. Which grade level(s) are you licensed to teach?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your highest qualification?

Diploma

Bachelor's degree

Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate

Master's degree

PhD/Doctorate

7. How long have you worked in Abu Dhabi as an expatriate teacher? *(please indicate in whole numbers e.g. 5)*

\_\_\_\_\_ years

8. Which of these subject(s) do you teach? *(Please tick as many as appropriate)*

Subject(s) taught	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
English Language	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. What were your reason(s) for seeking employment as an expatriate teacher in Abu Dhabi? *(Please tick as many as appropriate)*

Reasons for seeking employment in Abu Dhabi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Financial benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel to new places	<input type="checkbox"/>
Desire for new experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional growth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Which of these online sources of information was the most helpful during the time you were seeking employment in Abu Dhabi public schools? (rank in order with 3 being most helpful and 1 being the least helpful).

Online source of information	Rank
Social media e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Blogs, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube	<input type="text"/>
Recruiter's website e.g. Teach Away, Seek Teachers, Teach Anywhere etc	<input type="text"/>
Travel websites e.g Trip Advisor, Expedia etc	<input type="text"/>

11. How many minutes in total do you use social media each day? (please indicate in whole numbers e.g. 90)

12. How important was social media to you as an expatriate teacher looking for employment in Abu Dhabi? (7 being most important and 1 being not important)

13. What was your biggest challenge when you first moved to Abu Dhabi? *(rank in order with 6 being the most challenging and 1 the least challenging)*

- Different culture
- New lifestyle
- Loneliness
- New school system
- Making new friends
- Missing family and friends

14. How important is social media to you as an expatriate teacher living and working in Abu Dhabi? (7 being most important and 1 being not important)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15. How would you consider your use of social media after moving to the UAE? (please tick one only)

- Advanced user
- Debater
- Entertainment user
- Instrumental user
- Lurker
- Sporadic user

**Please state the extent to which you agree with the statements below:**

	<b>Statement</b>	Scale: 1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Neutral 4 = Usually 5 = Always				
16	I share my experiences of living and working in Abu Dhabi with others on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I regularly read about other expatriate teachers' experiences of living and working in Abu Dhabi on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I share my achievements and successes as an expatriate teacher on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I use social media to interact with other expatriate teachers outside my school.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I avoid using social media due to the negative comments posted online by other expatriate teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I share information more than I seek information on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I trust the opinions and views of other teachers on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I regularly engage in conversations with colleagues on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I maintain relationships with people in my home country using social media.	1	2	3	4	5
25	Teachers use social media to show that they care about other expatriate teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please state the extent to which you agree with the statements below:**

	<b>Question</b>	Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree				
26	Reading about other expatriate teachers' experiences on social media motivated me to seek teaching opportunities in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
27	I found out about teaching opportunities in Abu Dhabi through social media.	1	2	3	4	5
28	Posts on social media helped me understand the requirements for teaching in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Reading about other expatriate teachers' experiences on social media prepared me for life in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
30	Social media helped me deal with feelings of isolation when I first arrived in the UAE.	1	2	3	4	5
31	Reading about other expatriate teachers' experiences of living in Abu Dhabi on social media has a positive influence on me.	1	2	3	4	5
32	Social media has made me feel excluded from certain online groups in the expatriate teacher community.	1	2	3	4	5

33	Social media has enabled me to share my experiences with teachers outside my school without feeling that I will be negatively judged.	1	2	3	4	5
34	Social media has enabled me to benefit from resources shared by other expatriate teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
35	Comments from other expatriate teachers on social media have helped me reflect on my own practice as a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
36	Social media has created a sense of camaraderie where expatriate teachers can share their experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
37	Social media has had a negative influence on my time in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
38	I find my engagements with colleagues on social media rewarding.	1	2	3	4	5
39	I have good relationships with other expatriate teachers on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
40	Social media has enabled me to develop friendships online in the UAE which I now maintain offline/Social media has enabled me to develop friendships online in the UAE which I now maintain offline.	1	2	3	4	5
41	Expatriate teachers on social media have given me suggestions on how to overcome challenges that I have while working in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
42	Social media helped me develop an understanding of the cultural heritage of different stakeholders in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
43	Social media enables other teachers to acknowledge my successes and achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
44	Social media enables other teachers to show that they value my knowledge and experience.	1	2	3	4	5
45	Information on social media supports my professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
46	Information on social media enables me to develop new skills.	1	2	3	4	5
47	Social media enables me to feel connected to friends and family in my home country.	1	2	3	4	5
48	Social media enables me to receive support from other expatriate teachers in Abu Dhabi.	1	2	3	4	5
49	Social media enables me to receive support from friends and family in my home country.	1	2	3	4	5
50	Social media has enabled me to develop meaningful relationships with other expatriate teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

51. Which of these social media uses have positively influenced your decision to remain employed as an expatriate teacher in AD? *(Please tick as many as appropriate)*

<b>Social Media Uses</b>	✓
Information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media	
Knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences through social media	
Social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media	
Encouragement from other expatriate teachers on social media	
Encouragement from friends and family on social media	
Communicating with family and friends on social media	

Helping other expatriate teachers by offering advice on social media	
Concern and advice from other expatriate teachers on social media	
The ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time	
Advice from other expatriate teachers on social media	

## APPENDIX E – Focus Group Participants

<i>Teacher Number</i>	<i>Subject Taught</i>	<i>Starting Date</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>	<i>Age Range</i>
1	Mathematics	September 2015	Ireland	30-39
2	Mathematics	September 2017	USA	30-39
3	Mathematics	January 2019	India	30-39
4	Mathematics	January 2019	India	50-59
5	Science	September 2013	UK	40-49
6	Science	September 2016	USA	30-39
7	Science	January 2019	India	30-39
8	Science	January 2019	India	30-39
9	Science	May 2019	UK	20-29

## APPENDIX F – Focus Group Introductory Activity

### Instructions

- a. Please put the following social media uses in order of their influence on your ongoing decision to remain employed as an expatriate teacher in AD from most valued to least valued:

1. The ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time.
2. Information shared by other expatriate teachers on social media.
3. Knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences through social media.
4. Social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media.
5. Encouragement from friends and family on social media.
6. Communicating with family and friends on social media.
7. Advice from other expatriate teachers on social media.

- b. Compare your most valued and least valued with the other teachers in your group. Were there any similarities? Were there any differences? Why?
- c. Are there any other social media uses that are not included here that influence your decision to remain employed in AD as an expatriate teacher?



## **APPENDIX G – Focus Group Questions**

- a. What role did social media play during your recruitment as a teacher to Abu Dhabi?
- b. How does social media influence your determination to remain employed as a teacher in Abu Dhabi?
- c. How different would your experience in the UAE have been if you did not have access to social media?
- d. How useful has social media been in terms of support for you as an expatriate teacher?
- e. How do you think your use of social media will change in the coming year?

Finally, using the funnel pattern (Morgan 1996), questions for clarification were asked of each group based on issues that emerged during their discussions.

## APPENDIX H – Focus Group Transcripts

### Transcription of Focus Group Interviews: Focus Group Interview 1

<b>Date:</b>	30/06/2019	<b>Time:</b>	9.15am – 10.10am
<b>Number of participants:</b>	4	<b>Countries of origin:</b>	Ireland (1), India (2), USA (1)
<b>Participant names:</b>	FG11, FG12, FG13 and FG14		

Interviewer: Good morning. Thank you for participating in this focus group. I've had 50 responses from my survey. So now I am trying to triangulate to confirm the findings from the survey, but also to see if there are any other emerging issues. There were 10 uses that come from research about how people use social media, but I've made them specific to expat teachers and narrowed them down to 7 based on the results of the survey. I'd like you to rank them according to which of these you find the most valuable, which is your 7, and which of these you find the least useful which would be your 1. So, you are going from 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. So 7 is the one you find most valuable in terms of your recruitment and retention as an expat teacher, and 1 is the least valuable.

Interviewer: Which one was your most valuable?

FG13: It's the first one, the ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time.

FG12: Mine was encouragement from friends and family on social media.

FG11: I said communication with family and friends on social media.

FG14: Mine is also communicating with family and friends on social media.

Interviewer: That's interesting. How important is it for you as an expat teacher being able to communicate with friends and family on social media? Has that made your stay in the UAE a lot easier because you haven't felt too disconnected from friends and family?

FG12: Well, I mean you still feel disconnected but being able to have that social media and see like pictures of weddings, or you know those types of, the things that you are going to miss which is the most difficult part of being so far away. Especially, like, it's a 15-hour flight for me, so it would take a really long time to get back for a wedding, and it's just not possible usually, so to be able to see all of those things, and still, I mean, some people even post videos and that type of thing. That's a huge, a huge thing.

FG11: And it's so easy to do it as well you know, like, like I feel that I'm not missing out on a whole lot coz I still know everything that's going on through social media. Like, like, I don't have to ring my mum and ask her what's happening this weekend, social media is more than likely going to tell me what happened or what is going to happen, so 100%.

FG14: Every day we are getting updates from our, our home country, so what is happening and if there is any family issue, we are getting to know what is the exact thing, how they are doing. Everything, so it's really helpful the social media being an expatriate teacher.

FG13: For me I am not having the same feeling. I am not having a feeling that I am missing them. Because er, I'm getting the current news. Every day, every day I used to talk with my parents, and my husband, my children. And in the beginning I was having a loneliness feeling. And now I've made up. I have come to a level that, er, they are with me always using this social media.

Interviewer: So, the loneliness for you which was I know a big issue at the beginning?

FG13: It's not a big issue now.

Interviewer: It's not a big issue? Oh, that's wonderful. And would you put that down to social media or because you are more comfortable in this environment? What's making you feel that way?

FG13: Okay. I should create the social media first. And then the environment that I am getting now is more comfortable than, than what I was expecting.

Interviewer: Ok.

FG12: I think the time thing with social media also is, is the best thing. Just because if I wanted to call, I would have to plan up for a time and it would be, it would just be very

difficult because of the huge time difference. But with social media, they post, I see it when I wake up, I post back, whatever, whatever. So, you don't have to deal with any time issues, it just, it just gets done, you know.

Interviewer: What was your least valued, which was your least valued then? Which one do you find has the least impact on your decision to stay here?

FG13: The social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media.

Interviewer: Oh ok.

FG12: Mine too.

Interviewer: The same?

FG12: Uhm.

FG11: Mine is knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences on social media.

FG14: Mine is advice from other expatriate teachers on social media.

FG12: Yeah, those are my 3 lowest also. Just cause there's a whole lot of information that we don't really want to see a lot of the time. I think that's detrimental too.

Interviewer: So, you are choosing, you are not interested in advice from other expat teachers?

FG12: Not on social media.

FG14: (*Laughs*) Not on social media.

Interviewer: Not on social media? Why is that?

FG12: Because it creates a frenzy. Like, once one person says something, then it becomes this big giant thing and explodes, and who knows what's real and what's not.

FG11: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, a lot of rumours on social media which is a big problem, want something that's a bit more formal.

FG14: What comes first will be fixed in our minds. What comes first, it will be fixed in our mind. So, if once, if someone says it is true, then after that it will be a little difficult to convince that from the mind.

FG12: And I don't trust people just without knowing them, or just with seeing things. If it is somebody that I know and I trust in person, then sure I might be willing to take their advice as an expat if it's on social media. But if I don't know the person, which is what happens a lot of the time, there is just a lot of fear-mongering on social media and its easy, easy to spread it you know, so I try to avoid as much as I can.

Interviewer: So, you are selective about how you use social media?

FG11: Agrees (uh hum).

Interviewer: And what you take from social media?

FG11: Yeah.

FG12: Must be.

Interviewer: But do you think that is a general, is that how most expat teachers feel, or is that you making an effort to be that way? Or is that generally how people feel?

FG11: I think it's a personality thing as well. Some people are very much like I saw this is on Facebook, it has to be true. Whereas I would be a bit more standoffish in saying let's wait for something more formal and then we'll decide if it's true. Some people take it as gospel, this is what I saw, it has to be true, so now I am going to tell everybody that I know that I saw this and then, yeah so....

FG12: Which I don't understand actually though because a lot of the time it turns out not to be true and so you would think that after five times of it not being true, you would be a little more selective, but some people just are not.

FG13: You have to be selective to those who are optimistic, saying, taking all the things in the positive.

FG11: Yeah.

FG12: Yeah, definitely focus on the positive things on social media, instead of all the many, many, negative.

Interviewer: So, someone said information shared by other expatriate teachers, that's the least value to you?

FG11: That was one of my most.

Interviewer: Was that your most valuable?

FG12: I don't know about the information. Advice and knowing about the experiences and social interactions with them.

Interviewer: So, you would distinguish between advice and information?

FG12: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok.

FG12: Yeah, because information can just be like there was a 5<sup>th</sup> grade group or something and they are posting curriculum information that was helpful. It wasn't, it wasn't um subjective. So subjective things, kind of avoid, objective might be helpful.

FG11: Like we use social media a lot for like resources and stuff like things like that, or mock exams, like any resources I use I only get through social media really, if it's not directly from the school. So, everything else that I would use would be from other teachers that they have sent it to me via social media.

Interviewer: Ok. So, it actually, from a curriculum perspective, resources, you're more willing to accept resources you get through social media?

FG11: Yes, rather than opinions.

Interviewer: Opinions, oh and experiences?

FG11: Yes, like, share all the resources you want, just not your opinion.

*(They all laugh)*

Fatima: Yeah, that's it. That's true.

Interviewer: That's a nice distinction actually. Ok. So, I've put some of these as uses. This is based on what the research is saying people use social media for. Are there any other uses of social media that you, for you as an expatriate teacher that I have not included here that you think have been quite valuable? That have influenced your decision to remain here. (Referring to teacher who is leaving) I know you are not, but in the time that you were here?

FG11: I think it covers most things that we use it for.

Interviewer: Ok, so we are going to move on from that to some questions, which are sort of coming from this, but also wider questions. I wanted to find out how, because when I did the survey, most, the highest source of information for teachers trying to find a job in the UAE, were recruitment websites, social media came second, and third was websites like Trip Advisor that give you information about the country. So that tells me clearly that Teach Away and so on still have the biggest impact on you finding out about jobs and the package. But I know someone who said to me that well actually, to find out about the day-to-day experiences, Teach Away won't give me that so I go to social media for that. So, whichever country you were coming from, did you use social media at all to help you decide whether you wanted to work in the UAE?

FG11: No. I don't think, I didn't use it until I actually got here. So, I used Teach Away or one of those, yeah Teach Away to find a job. But in terms of research or anything, anything I needed to know, I asked them. And then, once I got here is when all of the questions start when I, when you start kind of looking for more information and then I went to social media for that. I actually don't think I once went to social media before I came to the country so.

Interviewer: Oh, ok.

FG12 : I didn't when I was looking for the positions, but once I was offered the position, then actually I started, because the Teach Away had given us a Google group that some teachers from the UAE were in, and so I did some communication with that, and looked at some of their experiences with that. And then also, I did a lot of, I don't know necessarily about social media, I googled a lot of things, and came up with like blogs that people had written about the good, the bad and the ugly or you know, that type of thing

Interviewer: Yes, and your blogs would be social media also.

FG12: Ok, yeah, some people's blogs were pretty helpful in deciding but I didn't, it wasn't until after I had applied and was offered the position before when I was finally deciding, do I come, do I not, are the good outweighing the bad, that type of thing.

Interviewer: So, whatever was on those blogs wasn't negative enough to make you think I am not going to go?

FG12: Well, it was, but (*laughs*) knowing it would be those types of things, it still was worth it because I needed a change.

FG11: Actually, I think I did read a good few blogs before I came down just thinking about it. I can't even remember what for now to be honest but...

FG12: Well, there is a lot of expats that had, when they had first moved here, they had chronicled their dealings and what not, and most of that was positive, but there were a few that were hidden ones that were negative ones, and you could kind of hear some of the negative things also. You guys? (referring to FG14 and FG13)

FG14: I think, I also used the social media before coming here, before joining here. So, I have, I have many friends who got the jobs here before so they had shared their experiences in the social media. So, I think that was very valuable for me because they are, they were my teaching mates, so it is more valuable because I know the persons, so they know what is going on, they will be giving the, I mean the correct information, what they are going through. So, I trusted the many things, what they are telling me rather than from the blogs and all.

Interviewer: Ok

FG11: Did you think you had like a, like a good understanding of what life was like in Abu Dhabi?

FG14: No, the reality is something different.

FG12: The reality is much different.

Interviewer: So social media didn't prepare you for the reality of living here. Ok. So, were you, so once you got here, once you were here, and you were actually working, did you find you were using social media more than you would have done initially?

FG14: Yes.

Interviewer: OK, and why was that?

FG14: Because here, you can or, many help I need because since I am living alone with my kids, I need to use the social media more rather than I was with my family. So, I think I'm using much more than.

FG11: For, like friendship or like for comfort

FG14: Yes.

Interviewer: So, your use of social media has changed, it's actually increased since being here because of that needing to feel connected to your family?

FG14: Family.

Interviewer: Ok.

FG13: For me, I didn't use any social media for searching for a job. Actually, that happened, and one of my friend only, just gave me website regarding this, and then I searched on the Google and I er, my, since my sister, my cousins were there in Dubai, so I asked them.

Interviewer: Were they teachers as well?

FG13: They are not teaching, but their friends are teaching in MOE schools, and they enquired about the job. That's how I got it. But from that time being, I started searching in different social media as well.

Interviewer: What were you trying to find out?

FG13: Especially how the system is, whether it is the same system that I was following in India and I found out the difference, and er, I was trying to find the methods, the different methods that the teachers used to use here to teach UAE students.

Interviewer: Ok, so you were using it to find out how it differs from the education system you were coming from.

FG13: Yes, yes, yes. And I found out the drastic difference between the system, the curriculums. So, I tried to, now I am using social media more, because I have to update more. And er....

Interviewer: What are you updating?

FG13: The methods, different methods of teaching and er I cannot use the normal lecture method, or the normal way of teaching I was doing in India. So, I have to take on the more activity-oriented teaching and so I have a huge connection with social media now with this.

Interviewer: Because of that. That's interesting.

FG11: I think in this country in particular though you actually cannot function day to day without using social media. Really. At the moment I have no data and I feel so disconnected. (FG14 agrees) Like I said to FG12 this morning, like if anything happens, tell me because I have no data. As in everything is communicated via Whatsapp, whatever, and if I don't have access to that, I feel like something very important is going to happen, and I am not going to know about it.

FG14: I feel like that.

FG11: Like especially here in this country, I was never like that. There is such a like, like a reliance on social media here like everything happens. And you see big announcements happen on Twitter before it is even, it is even formal.

FG12: Right.

FG11: So, like honestly, it's huge. It's part of like literally, if I was here on my own in the school today with no data I would die, I'd feel so disconnected.

FG12: *Laughs.*

Interviewer: So, you are literally hanging onto FG12?

FG11: I'm like FG12, if anything happens, if you get one message on your phone, then you tell me.

FG12: *Laughs.*

FG11: Honestly, its, that's how it works, especially here.

Interviewer: If you were working in your country, in your home country, would you feel the same way?

FG11: No, nothing about work goes through social media at home, nothing, like, absolutely nothing, everything would be like ...

FG12: People would get into trouble if they put things through social media.

FG11: It would be an important email or someone coming to tell you in person. But, like, I could leave my phone at home every day when I go to school and it's not a problem. Here, it's like cloned to me all the time, I need it for everything. It's a 'drug'.

*(They all laugh)*

FG13: Actually, I am totally surprised to hear the news that you can take the mobile phone to the class. That is strictly prohibited in our system in India.

Interviewer: And how are you communicating with our Alef person – through Whatsapp?

FG11: If we have any technical problems, it's WhatsApp, we message.

FG14: Training times are also on WhatsApp.

Interviewer: So, if we actually didn't have it, I wonder how effective we would feel our Alef person was?

FG11: We wouldn't be able to find her.

FG11: It's a huge convenience.

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so in terms of you staying here, when I did the survey, 29% of teachers, so a very small percentage said that the social media use they found they did not need, did not use, was concern from other expat teachers on social media. Most people said that they were not interested in other teachers showing them concern. Oh, you've had a bad day, oh it will be ok, they are not interested in any of that. Is that how you feel, that you don't look to social media for that kind of support?

FG11: No.

FG13: Not like that.

FG11: No, you, kind of ...

FG12: Maybe from relatives.

FG11: From family, but not from other teachers.

Interviewer: Really. So, if you've had a tough day, where do you get your support from? How do you get through that?

FG11: My family.

Interviewer: Your family?

FG11: Yeah.

Interviewer: Through social media?

FG11: Um, well, face to face if I can, but like, if I am having a really bad day, I'd probably WhatsApp my husband and say this, this and this, and then we'd talk about it when we go

home. Yeah, definitely, or, yeah, yeah, my family. Not other teachers, I would never message another teacher and put like my burden on her, except if it was one of us.  
FG12: But I would actually rather, I would probably call instead of social media-ing  
(*laughs*)

Interviewer: You feel you want to talk more than sending messages back and forth?

FG12: And I don't want it in writing.

Interviewer: Would you send a voice message over social media?

FG12: Yeah.

Interviewer: But you wouldn't put it in writing?

FG12: I would try not to. Because if it's a bad day, you don't want to, you're just venting, saying all this bad stuff, and yeah, I just want somebody to tell me, like in my ear.

FG14: Yeah, I too prefer that, a voice message or calling from my family, to solve this matter, rather than text messages.

FG11: Yeah definitely.

FG13: For me, I used to do this with the teachers because I have a relationship with them, so what advice they are giving, mostly they were very useful for me, share the things.

FG11: You're not gonna, you're not gonna message us when you can see us.

FG13: If I, face to face we are do, but I don't give a voice message to my husband because he can see my feelings from that, so after all the tensions are over, I will say the story. The tension...

FG12: Look at her, I would say misery loves company, you're coming down with me (*all laugh*) which might be why I am not married. (*All laugh*)

FG13: It's been 26 years of marriage.

Interviewer: So, what about you helping other teachers on social media? Is that something you regularly do or you're not seeking help and support from other teachers from that perspective. Would you provide that sort of support?

FG11: To my friends who would be teachers, maybe something about the school day. But like, it would be my friends. It's not like, I don't think, not for me anyway, no random person would be seeking advice from me, but personally someone might message me but they would be my friend that are looking for advice, and it could be to do with teaching or your job, but it is more to do with the friendship rather than the fact that we are teachers, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: And have you found that you have had, I'm thinking now this is why all of these were lumped together as not very useful: encouragement from others on social media. You are saying you would get your encouragement in person but not really on social media or you would speak to somebody, you'd call somebody.

FG12: Unless it's family, because you're not close enough to get it personally.

Interviewer: Because encouragement from family was rated quite highly but encouragement from other expat teachers was not rated as high. So, you still need encouragement, but it's who it's coming from?

FG11: Yes exactly.

FG12: With all social media.

FG13: When it comes from the teachers from other schools, I don't prefer that, but encouragement from this school, within this school, the teachers within this school, I feel so happy when they encourage me.

(*Collective agreement from the others*)

FG11: Yeah, there's a lot of different things going on in different schools, I think you kind of more, trust, like.

FG13: Because we are in the same situation.

FG11: Same situation. Exactly, it's more useful advice.

FG12: It's like we're a military company (*All laugh*). We don't go to other companies for encouragement. Band of brothers.

Interviewer: So, imagine. We have an idea of what it's like not having data. Imagine not having it at all. Imagine not having social media at all as an expat teacher. You're in the UAE, and there is no social media.

FG12: I would have left.

Interviewer: You would have left?

FG12: We would know nothing. Everything is in Arabic that we are given, so we really heavily rely on that social media.

Interviewer: So, for you, you wouldn't have stayed very long?

FG12: I don't think so. Already I'm leaving after 2 years, so I think it would have been 1 and done (*laughs*).

FG11: Same, honestly, 90% of what we know comes through social media. Like, it is our, it's our only way of communicating. It really is.

Interviewer: It's vital?

FG11: It's scary, It's as vital as oxygen. I think we rely on it too much, but whatever.

Interviewer: What about you?

FG14: I think we cannot survive without social media.

FG13: I really love it, you cannot take....

FG14: It's like, we are in a big ground we are alone, without any support.

FG12: And that's just within the country you know, we said before that we got a lot of communication with our families back home, and information from our families back home via social media. I don't know that I would have been able to function.

FG11: Honestly, I, like I communicate with my family even, my mum, we're so bad at ringing anyway, always have been, like because I would have seen her a lot face to face at home so now when I come, I honestly think that I would never talk to her only for social media coz I would send her a WhatsApp. I will send her a voice note on WhatsApp or something. I ring every couple of weeks but I am useless at ringing, like really useless. So, I actually think that I would know nothing about nothing in here, or at home, or anything that's happening. I would be the most disconnected person ever, honestly, like.

Interviewer: So, your social needs are a big part of – if those needs are being met?

FG11: Yep.

Interviewer: You're halfway there?

FG11: Definitely.

Interviewer: And if they are not being met, your brother, sister has had a baby, seeing those photos, all of those things really matter, as much as when you are here the information about what is happening within our school.

FG11: Absolutely. Everything. Every aspect of life in the UAE in particular is a lot to do with social media, like your personal life and your work life. Everything is communicated via social media.

Interviewer: So how useful has the support been? You talked about resources, resources you've got from other teachers, curriculum resources. What other sort of support are you getting from other expat teachers? What about for example when you first arrived, for example support with housing, how to set up Etisalat, that sort of stuff. Did you find that out through social media or through other sources?

FG11: Yeah, we did. When I first arrived, the very first thing that I made sure I was involved in was a WhatsApp group with all of new expat teachers who were just after arriving and someone would find out something and put it into the WhatsApp group and I, then I would find out that way. Otherwise, we were all trying to do the same thing and then get nothing done. So, I think yeah, definitely when we first arrived for small things to do with housing, electricity, anything that we needed to set up or do, I found out from my, from that group. It was 4 years ago.

Interviewer: What about for you for leaving? Are you finding out ideas from other people, make sure you do this, make sure you do that? If you don't do this, then you can't get that next bit signed off.

FG12: Yeah, I mean the only thing I have used is WhatsApp. I don't, I, after the first couple of months being here, I disconnected from all the Facebook groups that I was a part of and all of that because it was just too ridiculous. Too negative, too hearsay, too everything. I just didn't want to deal with that.

FG11: I think a lot of people sell their items via Facebook

FG12: That's true. Yeah, but I didn't really do much of that because I don't like doing any of that on social media. But yes, as far as like selling items, there are lots of groups that have



that type of thing. Um, when I first got here, I tried to buy a few items from Facebook groups. Yeah, I mean WhatsApp is mostly the thing, because when people, you know when somebody gets something, then they'll forward it to everyone else if they know that it applies to them or whatever. So, there were a few things that I thought, bits of information that I thought were helpful that I didn't get until last week. But it would have been too late if I had just got them last week.

Interviewer: What about you, when you first arrived, you had to find housing?

FG13: My relatives helped me a lot and er, there was a limit for them to help me. In that, for that I was connected to the WhatsApp group and the group of teachers, those who joined me when I was travelling, they were there in the group and there were some gent teachers, there were gents were there, male teachers were there, and they were knowing, they were knowing, they would be getting more information rather than the ladies, so they related me to some of the websites from where I can get all the things needed for my housing. It was very helpful. Now also, I am getting the help, whatever, if they plan something, they used to give on WhatsApp. So especially for Maths, they are helping me a lot. Without social media, I would have nothing.

FG14: It was pretty easy for me to find out and all since my husband was here. So, but it was a little difficult to do the visa processing so I got the number of some ... here in Abu Dhabi on the WhatsApp group because they have all shared. It's much easier in Dubai. Do the visa processing so I got the numbers in Abu Dhabi from the WhatsApp group from the teachers. Since they are going through the same process. So, at the same time, we are also going through. So, they have all shared that this is the person helping me. I learn the person he is a doing a very good job without much expense. So, I have taken the number from the WhatsApp group.

Interviewer: So, you are sponsoring your children?

FG14: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, you had to go through the whole process yourself?

FG14: Yes, the whole process.

Interviewer: So, you are responsible for everything?

FG14: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you think your use of social media will change in the coming year? So, things are changing, the system you are in is not the system you came in (but for you it is the same) is changing. Do you think it will intensify or not? Do you foresee any changes? How you use social media, how often you use it, what you use it for?

FG11: Well, like everything else that happens, we kind of won't know until last minute. What's going to change, what's going to happen? But while those things are changing, it's going to be used a lot more I'd imagine, because that is the one form of communication. So, a lot of things you know, the housing, or, the contracts, everything, if anything changes, medical, anything that happens, we going to find out through social media. Now the only thing is with social media is that it can cause a bit of a frenzy which is not an ideal thing. Like it's great to find out information, but, like I have to actually step away from it when I see people like, absolutely freaking out about the things that are said. I'm like ok now, I'm going to step away and just not even read. I don't know, I can't predict it. We going to be using it more if it's going to be the same because everything else happens.

Interviewer: What about you (addressing FG12) going to be an expat in another country?

FG12: Well, I do know that in China they use WeChat, they don't use WhatsApp, but they do everything through WeChat. They pay, they everything, everything is through WeChat and so I fully expect that it's going to be even more of an important thing there. Now, communication though, because I'll be at, it's still an overseas school with expats but it will be an American school, so it being an American school, they are more used to sending information through emails. And so, I think the email will be more important, plus it will be in English if I get something. But still, they use WeChat a lot, for a lot of communication. Right now, I'm in a group with all the teachers that are coming over and they've shared most of the information through WeChat.

Interviewer: So, is this a government policy or a school policy?

FG12: I think it's more a school thing than the government. It will still be social media, but different formats of social media. So, I will still have to get used to doing some of that. But I think still social media will still be important. And keeping up with my family still will be through social media and everything back home. I think it will be similar, and potentially maybe more.

Interviewer: Yes, I can see. If your salary is coming through WeChat.

FG12: I mean, you can pay at the grocery store through WeChat. Everything! Everything. WeChat pay is what they have. Yup, we'll see.

Interviewer: What do you think for you? You've been here, 7 months experience now. Will your use intensify, or actually, you won't use it as much? What will change for you, if anything?

FG13: Since I have only basic knowledge in computers, I have only basic computer skills. So, I think, the MOE is creating more apps, the learning, the teaching and learning process. So, I think I have to be more intensely using Internet and social media for learning how to apply in a classroom. I'm getting that information from some of the teachers here, but I have to sit my own way to learn them. I think even if I am getting a vacation or holidays, I used to be with because if I do regularly, I will be doing it for them so I think, it will be widely used, by, for me as far as I am concerned.

Interviewer: And for you?

FG14: I think I am also using much more because of, there are many apps, apps for teaching purposes, which are completely different to which I was using for the previous years. So, I feel I need to work a bit harder to make it more easier for in my class, in my classes, or in my lessons.

FG11: But even for the teaching for the students now when we are doing the projects for STREAM. One of their ideas was to set up an Instagram account, and even for the students to communicate with students or for students to communicate their ideas a lot of it is done. I know that there would be restrictions within this country regarding it, but a lot of things would be done via social media. Or, I'll say to the girls if anybody's absent in school, they're like, miss I'll snapchat her later and tell her, like or I'll WhatsApp her, like a lot of things that would be done for students via social media. It's hugely important for teaching and learning for us and the students also. Because, otherwise, I don't think these girls are going to go and make a phone call and say Miss said that we have to do this. It's super convenient for them to take a snapchat of them doing something for me, and then that spreads the word just as well, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: We finished the formal questions, I just wanted to touch on the fear-mongering and disconnecting. You said you disconnected?

FG12: I mean, I found that, like we were saying, everything is very subjective. So, if one person says something, like it's even remotely something that's going to be a negative impact, people run with it and they are like blah blah blah. Then other people chime in and they are like oh well I heard this.

FG11: I think it's a certain type of person that uses those things.

FG12: Definitely.

FG11: Honestly, and it's like, I go out like if there is a post about something and underneath it there is a big thread and people are commenting and commenting on what's being said. A lot of people would read it but not comment on it but it's only the people that would comment on it that are a certain personality.

FG12: That you don't want. You don't want that information you know.

FG11: There is a lot of trolling online, there's a lot of like ...

Interviewer: Are there people being quite negative?

*All participants: Yes*

Interviewer: To other expat teachers?

FG11: It's mostly negative.

FG12: Mostly, it's mostly negative, mostly. And then also just, I think that people feel freer on social media to say whatever they are thinking because nobody knows who they are, you know a lot of the time. So, there's, you know when I was first coming here, I was just like, I know I have to stay away from this person, this person, this person, because they

were just so like aggressive also, like anything that someone said, if it was a positive spin, they would, they wanted to bang and shoot them down.

FG11: Some people thrive on bad news. And social media is the place that they can just go and spread bad news. Like, I have to just step back from that like as in, I also am not a part of any of those groups.

FG12: You can't be in any of those groups.

FG11: Like I was when I first arrived because I was looking for information, but now, when I see the content, I'm just like, ok, like ok I'm gonna remove myself.

Interviewer: So, you also removed yourself?

FG11: Yes

FG14: I also removed myself from Facebook just because of this reason.

FG11: It's too negative.

FG14: Yeah, too negative.

Interviewer: So, you're looking for support, maybe something bad has happened and you are looking for support generally and someone is quite negative, which I'm really surprised about?

FG11: It's a place where people go to vent their anger.

FG13: According to me, we have to be away from the people, not only through social media. There are people always talking negative, so we have to be away.

FG11: Exactly.

FG13: Keep a distance.

FG11: But in your real-life situation, you can filter this out because you don't have to be around these people, but on social media, they are everywhere.

FG14: It is very difficult to filter the people on social media. It's very difficult.

Interviewer: It's interesting you said about the frenzy?

FG11: It [the frenzy] causes a commotion.

FG12: Well, and people that act on it also.

FG12: It's just those things too, you know, it just causes more time and frustration and everything, more than it needs to. Now if it was a formal something, like if it was somebody sending a formal email that says you have to do this or translating an email that's in Arabic that we actually all got, then that's something different. But most of the time it's not that, you know, it's just one person hears one thing, or one person thinks they hear one thing (*all agree*).

FG11: Then it explodes.

FG12: And then it's all over everywhere.

Interviewer: So, I would say you are selective about how you use social media?  
(*All agree*)

FG14: Very selective

FG11: 100%, I rely on it, but also, I have to select what I am going to use it for.

Interviewer: And that's partly to save yourself?

FG11: Yep.

Interviewer: And actually, doing that, has that actually meant you've stayed here longer because you have decided I am going to withdraw myself from this group.

FG11: Well, if I was one of those people that believed everything I read on social media, I would have definitely gone home by now because of so much anxiety and frustration. But no, you have to step back.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much, that has been very insightful. Thank you.

## Transcription of Focus Group Interviews: Focus Group Interview 2

<b>Date:</b>	31/06/2019	<b>Time:</b>	11.00am – 12.00am
<b>Number of participants:</b>	5	<b>Countries of origin:</b>	England (1), India (2), USA (1), Jordan (1)
<b>Participant names:</b>	FG21, FG22, FG23, FG24 and FG25		

### Group activity

Interviewer: Good morning. Thank you for participating in this focus group. I've had 50 responses from my survey. So now I am trying to triangulate to confirm the findings from the survey, but also to see if there are any other emerging issues. There were 10 uses that came from research about how people use social media, but I've made them specific to expat teachers and narrowed them down to 7 based on the results of the survey. I'd like you to rank them according to which of these you find the most valuable which is your 7, and which if these you find the least useful which is your 1. So, you are going from 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. So 7 is the one you find most valuable from your personal experience as an expat teacher, and 1 is the least valuable.

FG21: Can I carry on?

Interviewer: Yes, but if you've done the ranking, you don't have to answer the questions. We'll do that as a group.

Interviewer: Have you all finished? What was your highest? What was 7?

FG25: Information shared by other expat teachers.

FG24: Communicating with family and friends on social media.

FG22: Communicating with family and friends on social media.

FG23: Communicating with family and friends on social media.

FG21: The ability to communicate with groups of expatriate teachers at any time.

Interviewer: That's interesting. So, it's emerging that communicating with friends and family is quite important. (*Turning to FG21*) What was it on yours? Where did you put communicating with friends and family on social media?

FG21: That's actually the last thing that I do with social media.

Interviewer: And where did you put communicating with friends and family on social media?

FG25: That's my second.

Interviewer: So that's your second one? In the survey, communicating with friends and family was the highest. Communicating with groups of expats was also quite high. But the most important for expat teachers was communicating with friends and family on social media. It's interesting. What about the least, what's the least valuable to you?

FG21: Communicating with friends and family on social media.

Interviewer: Why is that?

FG21: Coz I actually call them. Like, just like sending them a WhatsApp message or text message, like, it doesn't give me what I need. Like, I need to, like, I need to hear their voice and I need to see their face. Like, especially when I call them, I'm usually stressed out about something. You know what I mean. And trying to explain things in a text message, things get lost in translation. Because they don't understand. Because my, my, sister might not understand what I'm talking about. I just want to talk to her you know what I mean? So, it's different. Like I don't like, so and I don't use Facebook and stuff like that either. I just use WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn, that's it. So, I don't, yeah. It needs to be more visceral and words don't do it.

Interviewer: Ok. And for you?

FG23: For me, the advice from other teachers on social media because I may not be in the same situation that they are. Ok, the problem will be the same, but the reasons for the problem may be different. So, you know like, I don't rely on their advices, I'd rather check what can be done in that particular, because you know, advices may differ. It's based on my experiences.

Interviewer: And you?

FG22: Mine was mixed. It was information shared which is sometimes really, really, good, but I put it as 1 because so often, it's wrong information, or it's like, it's just yeah, it's wrong information and it just irritates me. So, what I read on social media, I take with a pinch of salt and that's why I put it as my least valued. Again, it's the balance.

FG24: Mine was social interaction with other expatriate teachers on social media because I may listen to their advices but then if I have to go and meet somebody, I wouldn't be comfortable at all or talk to them in a group. No, I wouldn't take that step because it's coming from social media, I don't have any background of their er, from where they are coming from. So, I wouldn't take this risk. So that's the least for me.

Interviewer: Ok. And for you?

FG25: Knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences through social media.

Interviewer: That's interesting. I thought that would be higher up for you.

FG25: No, maybe they will give negative thoughts, complaining.

Interviewer: So, for you, even though you are quite new, that's not that important to you. How do you feel that would influence you?

FG25: I prefer to experience it myself.

Interviewer: Ok. Moving on, there were 10 social media uses that came up in the literature across different um, whether it is social media in universities, in schools, these are the sorts of things that were coming up. But there were 3 that I didn't include because most people rated them quite low. Which was concern from other expat teachers. People didn't think that was important to them. You showing concern for somebody else - they didn't think that was important. So clearly people don't need people to sympathise with them. That's interesting. Help and advice offered by other teachers - people didn't think that was valuable which is interesting and I think it comes back to maybe what you are saying about misinformation. And encouragement. The general feeling I got is that people don't go to social media looking for encouragement.

*Agreement from 3 teachers*

FG24: It's low.

FG23: It is low for me also. Because you know what happens, our thoughts are different. The process of thinking is different. Maybe a good word for me may not be a good word for somebody else. So then, you know, it may motivate one, but at the same time it may demotivate the other.

FG24: Primarily, it's your priority. For me, my family is important to me. But for somebody else, money would be important so they may accommodate that space or that sharing, but I would want to have a proper house for myself. So even if we are sharing views, our priorities are different. So, we may not be of any help or encouragement.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

FG21: That's super important for me. Like, information shared by other expat teachers on social media and knowing about other expatriate teachers' experiences was 7, were 6 and 5 for me. So, like, being concerned about other teachers and things that they are going through. I think, like that is, that's the, that's why I go to social media. Like if I need help with something, like I'll hop on WhatsApp, and I have close friends who will help me. Like when we came here from the States, I am still in two groups with the cohort of people that we came in. We all met in the hotel. And it has to be, probably about a hundred of us now all on one WhatsApp group. And just like, and they're all in Al Ain too. And like I'm like one of the ones who came to Abu Dhabi and it's just like a hundred people. And we all, no matter what's going on, we all touch base with each other. Like one lady's husband died, and it was just like sending condolences for her when we couldn't like actually get there or different stuff like that. Or if it's a birthday or if somebody had a baby, we go crazy. So, it's just like, that is, that is like, and every time something goes on or someone hears something, like this isn't hearsay information to me. Like, the stuff on Facebook, is hearsay information to me, but hearing it from these people, they are legitimately telling me this is what I heard. And you know, I don't like, I don't hold them to it, like I'm gonna kill you if it is wrong but, they are just like, yo, this is what I heard, what did you all hear? And so, we are all like concurrently trying to get to the bottom of it.

Interviewer: So, do you feel that it's not hearsay because you established that relationship before you set up the group?

FG21: Yeah, I've met these people in person, I've been to these people's houses, I've hung out with them.

Interviewer: So, it's a different group to one that you would just join where you've never met these people, so you feel you share similar values?

FG21: Yeah, like the only group that I've ever like when we go to STREAM and stuff like that, I don't like to be in those groups with people that I don't know. Yeah, I always remove myself from those groups. I'm only in groups with people that I have seen in person and that I know in person, yeah.

FG22: Like if it's specific groups. So, for example, on Facebook, you would join specific groups, like tailored to what your needs are. For example, there is a specific grade 6 science group which I am admin for, so and I have to like, there is like questions which you have to answer before you are entitled to join the group to prove which year you teach in, which school, because otherwise you get like sort of spam or people coming in there and they're just in there. *(Laughs)*. Yeah. Um so, yeah, so you join specific groups. Same with WhatsApp. So, I have this, at least 50 groups just for the dragon boating because we all have different interests, and rather than spamming the main practice group, we then have break off groups for the ones like for the ones who like to go diving, or the ones that like to go to quiz night. So we are not spamming one group with loads of messages because that puts me off if you're getting somebody who is constantly sending loads of messages.

Interviewer: Is there anything here that you think, in terms of social media uses that you think is not included here? Do you think there is something that the research is not actually identifying as an actual use for social media?

FG23: I don't know about Abu Dhabi, but like for giving alerts, or if there is a cyclone, or anything. Social media plays a very important role because it targets the masses. And also, for things like lost and found, missing persons, it's very helpful. Because at the same time it again, it targets a large population. Like she says, sometimes it's just a rumour.

FG22: Like selling things.

FG23: Yeah, like online shopping, sometimes you get a very good deal.

FG22: And it is targeted. Social media is linked to what your interests are.

FG23: And for gaming. I use it for gaming too when I have nothing to do.

Interviewer: So, think back to your recruitment. The survey is saying that teachers find Seek Teachers, Teach Away and Search Associates more valuable for finding opportunities here as opposed to social media. How did social media influence you when you were looking for a job?

FG23: I did not rely on social media.

Interviewer: So, you didn't use social media at all?

FG23: No.

Interviewer: So how did you find out about this job?

FG23: From my family.

Interviewer: So how did you find out about working for the MOE.

FG23: My husband was working for MOE so through him, I like I got to know ok. And then I applied directly through the website and then somebody contacted me. And like, I was like I can check reviews but then again like she said, sometimes the review will block your mind and the other thing, it will not give you open prospect about the thing.

Interviewer: And for you?

FG21: Oh, as soon as, so I found the job on Teach Away and Teach Away actually took us to Facebook. So, there are Facebook groups organised by Teach Away that they have to allow you to be in but then there are Facebook, there are the groups of teachers who are already here that you know, you just hop in and you say that you are thinking about doing this and they gave you all this kind of information. And there were like 5 people that I talked to that I asked if they thought that this was a good idea. And they were just like helping me think through the situation, like specially with my dog, coz I have a dog, and I was like, can I bring a dog over here? That's what I was talking to the 5 people about. And she was like, yeah, I brought my dog, I flew him here, I flew him here. The company that I flew my dog

with here, a lady on Facebook told me about it. And she sent me the information, she contacted them before I did on my behalf to let them know what was going on because she flew her dog from Chicago. So, it was, it was, Facebook was invaluable in terms of me figuring out whether or not I wanted to take this job. And then, I met up with people who were going to Chicago before we actually went, and one of the guys I did my interview with, we were literally sitting at the same table. I met him on Facebook, and now he lives down the way from me. So, yeah, he lives in the next apartment over and we knew that we were at the same interview because we met on Facebook.

Interviewer: Oh wow. So that's actually, for you it made a huge difference?

FG21: Yeah, because people, in the United States, folks gonna tell you what's going on.

Interviewer: And what about you?

FG25: Actually, there was an office, and they used to post jobs on Facebook. I found it through Facebook.

Interviewer: So, you found your job through Facebook.

FG25: And then I applied, they had the email, so then I sent my CV.

Interviewer: That's interesting. So, they advertised on Facebook?

FG25: Yes.

FG24: For me it was on social media. Her husband, my friend, so since we were all working together in Mumbai, and that's how we met, they passed on the message, and that's how we applied. So, we just did not go to social media for any kind of review.

Interviewer: So even when you got the job, you didn't think let me just go to social media to see what I'm getting myself into?

FG24: No, no. Because I had direct review from my friend, and she was speaking I mean, from the inside of the school, so I knew whatever she was telling me was trustworthy.

Then I knew I did not want to go to unknown people for any kind of review because then it would change my mind completely.

FG22: Mine was through a very tiny advert in the Times Educational Supplement, but the actual newspaper version, not online. So, I had a newspaper, so I rang up a number. I didn't realise when I got through it was Teach Anywhere. But they didn't direct me to Facebook. I had the interview down in London, so I met a few friends, I met a few people there that interviewed with who then I actually found myself here with. But then when I said I got the job in Abu Dhabi, one of my dad's friend's daughter had got a job in Abu Dhabi, but for a private school, so he put me through to her on Facebook. And although it wasn't with the, with ADEC, she was in a private school, then by going through Facebook, I could see other people, then I found the ADEC group. And so, I got chatting. And I suppose in a way it kept my sanity at the start, because you get zero information, zero information from Teach Anywhere, and you keep texting them, and oh yeah, yeah it will happen. It's only when you see other people are coming out and they are saying you know be patient, we got our letter. So, I may, if it hadn't been for Facebook, and being in touch with teachers who were actually being flown out here, I may have given up and gone, oh no, it's not happening, thinking it was a con. Because as I say, zero information, is this really, really happening, you know, what's going on.

FG21: For me, I think that's why Teach Away made that because people didn't trust the recruiters. So, they made this Facebook group where you could trust actual, actual, where you were more likely to trust actual teachers who went through it. Because somebody would hop on there and say, 'I ain't got my letter yet, they ain't told me when I I'm shipping out yet', and then folks would hop on there with their stories. Like it took them like a whole 2 months to send it to me, so don't worry, it's gonna move fast, make sure you got all this together. Or like if you needed some paperwork and you didn't know where to go, they would find somebody in your area, be like, oh, I got this notarized here. So, I think Teach Away was kind of using the other teachers for some street cred (*laughs*).

Interviewer: Yes, interesting. So that's from a recruitment perspective. But now we are going to talk about you being here. Some of you have been here a few months, some of you have been here quite a long time. What's been your biggest influence in terms of social media. Has social media facilitated your stay here, has social media made you think, yes, I can do this? Or have you gone the opposite direction and thought if I'm going to stay, I'm

going to avoid social media. What's your experience of social media, of someone who thinks, I'm actually working here, is this tool with all its facilities, affordances, is it actually helping me or is it a hinderance?

FG21: I feel like I'm talking a lot, but absolutely because, um, the people that I'm friends with on WhatsApp and the groups that I'm in, I think they're very smart people and it's a mix between people who've been here for a long time and people who've been here for a short amount of time. People who have kids, people who don't have kids, people who married, and people who are single. And when you are trying to make a decision and you hear other people's thoughts on the process.

Interviewer: You've said you don't listen to other people, so do you look at social media at all, are you in any groups with other expat teachers, or are you like, you know I'm here on my own and I have the things that I want to achieve?

FG25: I feel like I'm kind of an introvert so I don't, I avoid social media.

Interviewer: Oh, ok. So even with the people you started with, the people you were in the hotel with you, you're not in groups with them?

FG25: I have some, but we don't talk about jobs, we're just friends.

Interviewer: Ok. So, it's not having an influence on whether you stay or leave?

FG25: No.

FG24: It influenced me big time. Like the moving from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, or finding the housing in which area in Abu Dhabi. I did not have many people to interact with directly. It was directly on the Facebook that I used to ask for views and opinions, and then connect with those people and ask them personally. So, it helped me, at least to decide whether I want to continue in this city, yes, where do I need to place myself which is closer to the school, to the hospital, to my job, to all this, to the market area, everything, it helped.

FG22: It's more WhatsApp groups that help me stay because they are my friends, and it's the dragon boating.

Interviewer: So, do you rely on other people's opinions? Because even some of your dragon boating friends are expat teachers and you've been here the longest. Has that been the biggest influence because you have had that friendship, that support group, with other interests, but they are also going through the same thing you are going through?

FG22: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: So, if you didn't have dragon boating, do you think you would still be here?

FG22: No, absolutely not.

Interviewer: Ok. So, are those new friends? Or friends you made here? How did you meet them? Through social media?

FG22: Through dragon boating. Some of them I brought to dragon boating through social media. So, they have joined dragon boating through Facebook groups, through, you know, the meet-up groups and by posting it on the teacher groups. That's how I found two very close friends, just by posting you want to try something new and forget about all the stresses of this then come and try dragon boating. And they did, for two of my best friends.

Interviewer: So, there's research that talks about using social media to establish relationships online, and then they maintain them offline. You're a classic example of that. That friendship is now actually offline. Some people only ever have the friendship online. Your friendship goes beyond that.

FG22: Yeah.

Interviewer: What about you?

FG23: Travelling was a big big issue and social media helped me with that.

Interviewer: How?

FG23: To find a driver that can bring me every day from to Dubai to Abu Dhabi and then from Abu Dhabi to Dubai is not an easy task because they run away half way. They will come one day, they won't come the other day. So then like through social media I got two numbers, then I contacted them and through those contacts I got this current driver. And every day he brings us here. And I may be late but he is never late. So that is something which I don't think coming here I could have searched him, you know like, but social media, because it reaches the huge mass and because of that I got him. And the other benefit is while I was searching my house. It was very important, like I decided to stay in



Dubai and travel to Abu Dhabi. So, for me it was very important to select a place which will not be in that traffic zone. And also like a place where we can live. It should have a lot of free activities for my daughter, or my husband or myself. That was the reason why I used social media. I took a lot of reviews for areas, which area would be better to live in with family because without that it would have been impossible. So, for me, it helped me to find a house, it helped me to find a driver who can drive me and the other most important thing is for the school. I had to select the school for my daughter and then for selecting a school, it was like we have some type of areas, ok you want this goal, you want this curriculum, and what about the teachers. So, I read lots of social media reviews and then contacted those people, I spoke to them and I really took the feedback, about how is this school like, are you really satisfied because we had a new campus coming up. So, all those things. So yes, it did help me to take three important decisions which, er, because of which I am here, because if these things are not sorted, I don't think I would be here, not able to continue with, especially with the travelling part, because without the travelling part, I don't think I would come here to Abu Dhabi to work, it would be really, really difficult.

Interviewer: So now, you've talked about all the things social media has done for you. Now let's imagine social media does not exist. How different would your experience be? Would you be here? What would it look like?

FG21: I would be, I would be like too isolated from my family and that would have been a deal breaker for me.

FG22: I just call.

FG23: For me, I don't know, without social media I don't think, although I am here with my family, but you know the other members of my family, my mum, my dad, so you know, as I said for me, it is even to communicate with my family and friends. It has a lot of importance. So, I don't know if I would be here if social media is not there because the connectivity would have not been there. You are here all by yourself, you are all alone. And also, like making friends.

Interviewer: Yes, making new friends.

FG22: Same, I wouldn't have heard about dragon boating if it wasn't for social media.

Interviewer: So, your six years wouldn't have been six years?

FG22: No. My initial plan was 2 years, well obviously because of family. But it's also the travel as well that has kept me here. So, it's difficult to say how much you would still be here and how much you wouldn't because you're not in that situation, but it's definitely helped me stay.

FG21: Coz we probably would have found some other way.

FG22: Yeah.

FG24: I would have been completely isolated, probably mentally sick I would admit. Because I remember when my father was working abroad, he used to give a date and time. Thursday, 12 o'clock, I'm going to call you by the time, please reach you neighbour's place, who, they just had one phone in the entire area. So, 11.30 we would dress up and then my father would call. So once a week, probably once in 15 days, that's how I spent my childhood. I did not want that to happen now, so this has helped me stay connected. Ok, I may not be there physically for you, but I am virtually there to see what's going around, probably advise you, guide you. I'll probably take the advice from you. So, without that I don't think how I would have survived.

FG22: Yeah, I suppose I used to live in the same country but down in Kent, but I felt so isolated that I moved back home. Maybe if I had had Facebook (FG24 agrees) and social media.

FG24: I agree.

FG22: Then, I wouldn't have been so quick to move back home. So, I suppose I have had the experience of being somewhere, isolated without social media and only having like a phone.

FG24: Just one mode of communication, and letters, and stuff like that. I don't think it would have been practically possible.

FG23: Even like emails have made our lives so easy. With letters, I don't know when the things would have reached and how it would have gone. Even like getting our jobs also, if

we rely on a letter, I'm sure we'd be hired this year and working for the next year. It wouldn't have reached us.

*(All laugh)*

FG21: Like my grandmother, my nana, so many, like my older family members don't have social media. They got the flipped phones, they got the analogue, it's not an analogue phone but they got the little old, and they don't have, they don't have social media and I feel so isolated from my grandma, because it's so expensive to call her. Yeah so, my older family members are people who aren't hip to social media. Its, I feel like when I go back to the States, I'm gonna have to rebuild some relationships. Yeah.

FG25: And also, my grandmother, when she is with my sister, I call her.

Interviewer: But you haven't got that direct link with her because she's not on social media?

FG25: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what about your family at home. Are you regularly in touch with them on social media?

FG25: Yes

Interviewer: And are they encouraging, like stick it out, stick it out, it's gonna be ok, keep going

*(All laugh)*

FG25: Yeah, they do that. When are you coming back, they keep asking me?

FG24: One incident I remember, my uncle, he was in US. He came back after 5 years. He had seen me 5 years back and I was 10 years old, by then I was 15, but he'd got me the dress for a 10-year-old. Oh, when did you grow up? But I was like fine, you didn't see me for 5 years but obviously I grew up.

*(All laugh)*

But mentally I had not grown up for him. He had got me the same toys and dolls, and I was like I'm a teen now, please realise that. At least now we know, ok my child is growing up, putting on weight, I can see that. I can visualize, you know how, I mean physically grown up my children are. My uncle had no idea, what size, for him we were only those 10, 11, year olds.

Interviewer: That he left 5 years ago.

FG24: 5 years ago.

Interviewer: How useful has social media been in terms of support to you as an expat? So, for example, sharing curriculum resources, assessments, how are you assessing this piece, this exam question. How useful has it been to you from that perspective?

FG23: We just did a lot of things with grade 7. So, I think we took a lot of advice.

Interviewer: It [social media] was useful to you marking?

FG21: Yeah.

FG23: Yeah, a lot of things. Not only marking. But you, know like certain questions, I wanted to share, is it the same feeling with the other teachers? So, we come to know, ok, we all are on the same track. It's not that I am thinking on a different tangent and the others are on a different tangent. It's not only here, but everywhere which makes it ok, we all are going in the same direction. It helps us.

Interviewer: It validates your thinking. It validates what you are thinking

FG23: Yes.

FG21: It's easier to find people. FG22 does something that I absolutely love. We will have virtual science team meetings and it is the most efficient thing in the world. For us, for like, sometimes if it's one or two things that she needs to tell us because our Science meeting was so late in the week that by the time she gave us information we felt like we were behind. So, she would give us a primer. So, if there was anything that couldn't wait till the end of the week, she would give us a primer.

Interviewer: And she would do that through social media?

FG21: And she would ask, we would ask. It was a record of everybody's questions and she would answer them there. So I was, like if I was throughout the day and I was too busy to be contacted, I would go home after work and see what I missed out on. It was concise, and it was exactly what I needed. So, and I was just like. Coz you know how many meetings you

sit through that could have been sent through an email and then I don't always have time to check my email.

Interviewer: Yes.

FG21: So, it, I loved that about her as a science coordinator. Like she strategically uses the Whatsapp to keep us, to keep our department together. And if it's something that's super important we sit down, we would always sit down and have our meeting, but I didn't come to the meeting feeling like, yeah.

FG23: Even if we are missing a particular lesson, like I remember, I did not go for one of my training because I had to go somewhere else. So, it was like all these teachers posted whatever they shared, so that you know, we don't miss on things. Next day, when we go for that training, next week, it is still connected. I'm not like ok, what happened last week. Even the PLC training, or whatever, whatever is just is there. They do post it. Whatever is done. You missed this. So, it becomes easy to connect next time you go. So, I think, I don't know, she uses it in an effective way, that, it is helpful.

FG21: It's also really helpful with the language barrier. Because our science tech speaks Arabic. But she was responsible for helping me in the lab. So, on WhatsApp I can send something in English and Arabic. So I was, I did it, I do that all the time. Like, if I need to, with a teacher that doesn't speak Arabic, that's how we got it done. So, it really has been super helpful with the language barrier. Even with parents. Like, you know, if you are messaging a parent, it was super, super, helpful with the language barrier because you have this technology that will translate for you and you can't do that in person.

FG22: In terms of actually sharing physical resources we use in the classroom, teachers are not very good with that anyway. I don't think I can find anything on Facebook. Like I'm doing this lesson this way, this is my worksheet, teachers do not do that. Everybody is just reinventing the wheel everywhere because people don't like sharing stuff.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

FG22: It might be Facebook or in person.

FG24: Amongst our group, it helps today is the last day, please log in, today is the day to give your final assessment log in, so amongst all our friends, ok, today is the day. Because the messages come, all of us will log in again, submit our ID or whatever the closing date. We need those deadlines because of this.

FG21: All of these circulars that they send, all of these circulars that they send around the school about things that we have to do and where we need to be. Like for example, when we do exam proctoring, invigilating, they put a picture that comes through on a WhatsApp, that's how I know I have to invigilate. Because I get here early and then (Teacher A) usually the first person who sees it and takes a picture. Or when we are having an observation. So, they send a picture, like they send a picture. And then I can always go back and reference that picture to find out when my, like, er, she's wonderful for this.

Interviewer: Ok.

FG24: But it's important.

FG22: It [social media] doesn't completely replace the meetings and the minutes, it's just this is happening, this is what we discussed on Thursday.

FG21: It definitely, it never replaced the minutes, but it helps keep me more invested because I show up to a meeting and it's very clear what I am going to be doing. You know what I mean? It doesn't replace the meeting, but she tells me hey, I can't meet you till Wednesday, these are the things we are going to discuss, be prepared if it comes up beforehand. And then, when we get to the meeting, I am so much more invested in the meeting because I know exactly what we are going to talk about. And we actually, I actually come up with questions. Me and (Teacher B) would come with questions like this this this, cool, cool, cool. So, it [social media] was definitely a helper in terms of productivity.

FG24: Many times when you have to read between the lines, your social media will work, ok, I'll text you, ok, do this, do this and come to the place. But when you officially announce something, it has to go on email, because it has to be documented.

Interviewer: Yes, it has to be official, but anyway, we digress. How do you think your use of social media will change? Do you think it will change next year? Is anything going to change or is it business as usual? As an expat teacher?

FG23: I don't think the social media will change you know. Again, I said, opinions and things concern are different. I don't think it will really, really, have any effect, when, because if I change from here to Dubai suppose, then again, the opinions, the things, they are still the same.

FG21: I'm more likely to switch from using a cell phone to using like an I-pad that can make calls because there is a lot that I can do on my phone already but it's just not big enough for me to get it all done in one place. So, I think that is the biggest change and I'm probably going to make, the device, not the uses of social media.

Interviewer: Ok. Interesting. For you (FG25). No, you're going to carry on?

FG24: I might reduce my usage of social media.

Interviewer: Why?

FG24: Because I think I'll be more set and so I wouldn't ask so many questions. And I would be knowing things myself and I wouldn't need to investigate or probably talk on the social media

Interviewer: And your children will be here?

FG24: Yeah, so a lot of things will be sorted out hopefully next year, so I might reduce my usage.

FG22: I will be the same. Balanced view of what you read on there, from negative to positive. As I say, there's some great stuff on there and there is some stuff there that scares you.

Interviewer: So, has anyone actually stopped, has anyone actually come off a group on Facebook or whatever, because they felt it was having a negative effect? You did?

FG25: Not negative. But many people and they send so many messages. So, I cannot read all that.

Interviewer: So, your phone was pinging all the time?

FG25: Yeah.

Interviewer: You just came off it? Anyone else?

FG21: I got off Facebook in 2015, I got back on just so I could keep up with the things that were going on with this job. And then I got back off of Facebook.

Interviewer: Oh, so you are off of it again?

FG21: Yeah, coz once I knew I was coming and I got all my letters, I didn't care about the stuff on there. It became fear-mongerish. So, I was just like, no I don't need this, I got my letter and I'm going, I don't need to share, it was kind of messed up. I was like I don't need to share my experiences. The people that I really liked from the group, we traded numbers so we moved from that social network platform to another.

Interviewer: Ok. Thank you so, so, much. Very insightful.

## APPENDIX I - Initial Online Survey Participants

<i>Teacher Number</i>	<i>Subject Taught</i>	<i>Starting Date</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age Range</i>
1	Mathematics	September 2015	Ireland	Female	30-39
2	Mathematics	September 2017	USA	Female	30-39
3	Mathematics	September 2015	South Africa	Female	30-39
4	Mathematics	January 2019	India	Female	30-39
5	Mathematics	January 2019	India	Female	50-59
6	Science	September 2013	UK	Female	40-49
7	Science	September 2016	USA	Female	30-39
8	Science	January 2019	India	Female	30-39
9	Science	January 2019	India	Female	30-39
10	Science	May 2019	UK	Female	20-29
11	English	September 2015	USA	Female	50-59
12	English	September 2015	South Africa	Female	20-29
13	English	September 2017	South Africa	Female	30-39

## APPENDIX J - Data Collection and Data Analysis Schedule

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>
<i>Develop online survey</i>	Online survey developed using Google Forms. Questions initially developed in MS Word and then copied to Google Forms. Options for closed questions included in design. Decisions made about types of closed questions e.g. multiple choice, check boxes and Likert scales.	03/05/2019	19/05/2019
<i>Pilot questions</i>	Online survey questions emailed to 2 participants for feedback on ease of use, time it took to complete questionnaire and relevance of questions.	20/05/2019	23/05/2019
<i>Revision of online questions</i>	Definition of social media added to questionnaire, some questions re-worded and some added based on feedback.	24/05/2019	25/05/2019
<i>Informed consent</i>	Informed consent and information summary issued to participants based on convenience and snowball sampling.	26/05/2019	02/06/2019
<i>Online survey administered</i>	Online survey emailed to all participants who agreed to take part in the survey. Reminder email sent to those who had not responded in the middle of the survey week.	26/05/2019	25/06/2019
<i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Online survey responses exported to MS Excel and analysed.	25/06/2019	11/07/2019
<i>Develop focus group questions</i>	Focus group questions developed based on the outcome of the quantitative data analysis.	10/06/2019	15/06/2019
<i>Focus group interview schedule</i>	Issue focus group interview schedule to participants with details of their group and the date, time and venue of the interviews.	24/06/2019	26/06/2019
<i>Focus group interviews</i>	2 focus group interviews conducted. Each focus group interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes with 4 expatriate teachers in the first group and 5 in the second.	27/06/2019	30/06/2019
<i>Transcription of focus group interviews</i>	Focus group interviews transcribed in preparation for qualitative data analysis.	05/07/2019	19/07/2019
<i>Qualitative data analysis</i>	Qualitative data analysis using transcribed focus group interviews.	20/07/2019	20/08/2019

## **APPENDIX K – Participant Information Summary**

### **The influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in public schools in Abu Dhabi**

#### Participant Information Summary

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of social media on expatriate teacher recruitment and retention in schools in Abu Dhabi. In this study, social media is defined as Internet-based channels that allow users to interact and share content with other users. Examples of social media include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube, Whatsapp, blogs and wikis.

The views of both current teachers and those who have moved on is extremely valuable as it provides insight into how social media can be harnessed to support expatriate teachers in their attempts to seek employment abroad and how it can meet the needs of expatriate teachers as they navigate their way through a different social, cultural and educational context away from their family, friends and former colleagues.

While the purpose of the research is to examine expatriate teacher use of social media in relation to recruitment and retention, the private use of social media is not relevant to this study. Therefore, comments made on social media are irrelevant to this study and as such will not be considered or used.

From a professional level, it is important to note that contributions during the research will have no bearing on the evaluation of the performance of current teachers nor will the decision to not take part at all, or to withdraw participation during the study be deemed detrimental to existing relationships.

## APPENDIX L – Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant

I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Bath in England. My university has given me permission to conduct research to establish the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD. I would appreciate your participation in this study as an expatriate teacher currently or previously employed in AD.

Participants will either take part in an online survey or focus group interviews, or both, providing valuable insight into how social media has influenced both their recruitment and retention to schools in AD. The online survey should take no than 20 minutes to complete while participation in focus groups of 3-4 teachers should require between 30-40 minutes of participants' time.

Your name and the name of the school that you currently, or have previously worked in, will remain confidential as pseudonyms will be used. Furthermore, all data collected during the online surveys and focus group interviews will be stored on a password protected computer. Participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any point during the survey or focus group interviews without the requirement for explanation. No financial incentives will be offered for participation. The findings of this study will be published in this dissertation and possibly in educational journals.

You can contact me, Professor Hugh Lauder or Dr Tristan Bunnell of the University of Bath who are jointly supervising this study if you have any questions. They can be contacted on [hugh.lauder@bath.ac.uk](mailto:hugh.lauder@bath.ac.uk) or [tristan.bunnell@bath.ac.uk](mailto:tristan.bunnell@bath.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Daisy Johnson    Signature: \_\_\_\_\_    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I understand the above conditions and that my participation in this study is voluntary. I agree to participate in this study and acknowledge that I can exercise the right to withdraw my participation at any point during the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_    Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX M – Principal Consent Form

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Bath in England. My university has given me permission to conduct research to establish the influence of social media on the recruitment and retention of expatriate teachers in AD.

I would like to interview expatriate teachers in the school and therefore request your permission to do so. Their participation will not require them to discuss issues relating to the school, but rather focus on how social media influenced their recruitment and retention. Their names and the name of the school will remain confidential and they can withdraw their participation at any time.

The findings of this study will be published in this dissertation and possibly educational journals.

You can contact me, Professor Hugh Lauder or Dr Tristan Bunnell of the University of Bath who are jointly supervising this study if you have any questions. They can be contacted on [hugh.lauder@bath.ac.uk](mailto:hugh.lauder@bath.ac.uk) or [tristan.bunnell@bath.ac.uk](mailto:tristan.bunnell@bath.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Daisy Johnson    Signature: \_\_\_\_\_    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### PRINCIPAL CONSENT FOR EXPATRIATE TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I understand the above conditions. I give permission for my teachers to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_    Date: \_\_\_\_\_