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FACULTY AND PARENTS**

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DO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STAFF RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING ABOUT THIRD CULTURE KIDS (TCKs)? PERSPECTIVES FROM FACULTY AND PARENTS

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This article empirically assesses the extent to which international school staff receive professional development training about third culture kids (TCKs). We argue that the needs of TCKs enrolled in international schools differ from those of non-expatriate children and that international school staff may require a specialized set of professional skills and competencies to effectively cater for the specific needs of TCKs in the classroom. Based on interviews with 115 respondents (34 teachers, 33 staff, and 48 parents) in three international schools in Asia, we draw on data from 25 focus groups conducted in Singapore and Shanghai. Evidence shows that no professional development training in relation to TCKs is provided specific to the international context in which staff are employed. Only surface level training appears to be offered in the form of tacit acceptance of information and rushing to cover ad-hoc and informal material but providing little content depth. Issues that are not adequately addressed include staff start-of-year induction, identity lifespan and cultural issues, pastoral care, TCK emotional wellbeing, international mindedness curriculum education, and TCK transitions via repatriation and reassignment. The study contributes to the extensive literature on expatriate training and development and global careers by positioning international school teachers and staff as expatriates engaged in international careers, whose professional development training enhances their effectiveness both on-the-job and while living and working abroad. We further add to extant literature on the career development of international school staff that, thus far, has excluded TCK professional development as a specific focus.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is to examine the extent to which international school staff receive professional development training about third culture kids (TCKs). We define ‘school teachers’ as those engaged in direct classroom instruction, and ‘staff’ as non-teaching faculty engaged in support or management roles such as pastoral care, counseling, admissions, librarianship, head of school, and learning support¹. The inclusion of non-teaching staff in the study is deliberate given that development of the ‘whole child’ (and teachers’ learning about the child) is informed not only by classroom activities but by the entire school faculty. The fundamental argument for the study is drawn from Grimshaw and Sears (2008), wherein the needs of TCKs enrolled in international schools differ from those of non-expatriate children. As such, we contend that international school teachers and staff may require a specialised set of professional skills and competencies to effectively cater for the specific needs of TCKs in the classroom. Based on interviews with 115 teachers, staff, and parents in three international schools in Asia, we draw on data from 25 focus groups conducted in Singapore and Shanghai to report their perceptions in relation to TCK professional development training.

The study contributes to the extensive literature on expatriate training and development (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006; Puck, Kittler, & Wright, 2008; Shen & Lang, 2009; Suutari & Burch, 2001) and global careers (Baruch, Dickmann, Altman, & Bournois, 2013; Inkson & Thorn, 2010; Makela & Suutari, 2009; Tams & Arthur, 2007) by positioning international school teachers and staff as expatriates engaged in international careers, whose professional development training enhances their effectiveness both on-the-job and while living and working abroad (Hayden, 2002; Suutari & Burch, 2001) (see Davoine, Ravasi, Salamin, & Cudré-Mauroux, 2013; P. C. B. Lee, 2002; Oberholster, Clarke, Bendixen, &

¹ We acknowledge that our terminology is simplified wherein teaching and non-teaching staff are all considered ‘faculty’. In this study, teachers are defined as those having direct contact with students, whereas support staff such as counselors who are specialist teachers, and admission staff who are considered ancillary staff, are considered non-teaching faculty.

Dastoor, 2013; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Richardson, McKenna, Dickie, & de Gama, 2013 for similar studies of expatriates in other professions and industries). A further contribution is to add to extant literature on international school teacher's career development (Black & Armstrong, 1995; Richards, 2002) which, thus far, has excluded TCK professional development as a specific focus (e.g., Bunnell, 2005a, 2005b; Langford, 1998). The study further contributes to the literature on international education as a career choice by extending the very small number of empirical studies that explore diversity in education careers (e.g., Alviar-Martin & Ho, 2011; Simandiraki, 2006) and professional development for international school teachers' and staff in particular (e.g. Black & Armstrong, 1995; Black, Harvey, Hayden, & Thompson, 1994). The paper addresses this gap.

In this paper, we contextualize professional development training as a facet of organizational leadership (e.g., King & Newmann, 2001; Wildy, Pepper, & Guanzhong, 2011), whereby aligning school policy with curriculum documents, curriculum elements, and learning, teaching and assessment outcomes and experiences, is positioned as a first step in understanding, appreciating, and responding to the needs of international school staff as educators (Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Tomlinson, 2004), as well as TCKs as students (Mulford & Silins, 2011). The practical implications of our findings are discussed through the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Papalia & Feldman), where human development is explained within a series of nested systems, with each system linking directly or indirectly to the setting in which the developing individual resides, in this case the international school.

The article commences with a brief overview of TCKs, including the challenges and issues that TCKs face as students within the international school setting. Next, it briefly reviews the literature on professional development for teachers, followed by justification as to why we chose to study international schools in Asia. This is followed by an explanation of the

methodology, after which findings are presented, concluding with a discussion and overall implications of the study for research and practice.

THIRD CULTURE KIDS

Third culture kids are the children of parents who live in a foreign country for their work (Peterson & Plamondon, 2009; J. Useem, Useem, & Donoghue, 1963), which may include occupations in the military, diplomatic corps, mission field, non-profit sector, education, and international business (Fee & Gray, 2011; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Wilkinson & Singh, 2010). Prior studies (J. Useem et al., 1963; 1973) define three cultures that TCKs inhabit: (a) the child's country of origin and/or parental culture, of which they hold a passport but may or may not have been born in; (2) the host country in which a child is currently living; and, (3) the community within the second culture that a TCK most identifies with in terms of a shared lifestyle and meaning, e.g. an expatriate compound, or an international school. The TCK experience is marked by the continual process of living in and among different cultures (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) and is impacted by two interconnected realities: (a) the experience of a truly cross-cultural world beyond only watching, studying or analyzing other cultures from a distance; and, (b) existing in a highly mobile world which continually changes in terms of people, places, and things. For many TCKs, these realities often (but not always) manifest in a sense of rootlessness and a lack of full ownership in any one culture they inhabit in spite of retaining a relationship to all (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Hence, the TCK experience often creates a subtle underlying tension as a child struggles to develop a sense of identity, relationships with others, and their own view of the world during a fragile stage of their development, i.e. the early and adolescent years. For this reason, TCKs can be perceived as victims of globalisation where culture and identity collide. Yet, the TCK experience can also foster positive gains, and not in the least the development

of a skill-set that is highly sought after on the international labour market (Bonebright, 2010; Selmer & Lam, 2004; 2011).

Adapting from Grimshaw and Sears (2008), the conceptual framework that underpins this study relates to TCK identity as a socially constructed phenomenon in response to one's lived experience and social interaction with others of a similar background. It includes that individuals can be conditioned by others within their environment which may subsequently challenge their academic, emotional, and social wellbeing (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Peterson & Plamondon, 2009). A central argument is that international schools play an important role in helping TCKs socially construct their identity. This is because international schools share several common characteristics that TCKs come to understand as 'normal': teachers, staff and students are multi-culturally diverse, and there is a high turnover of the student body (Langford, 1998; MacDonald, 2006). Moreover, while the content of children's stories in the international school community may differ, the experience of the TCK is nonetheless universally understood much like a familiar script (Pascoe, 2009).

An international school is defined as one that is '*independent of any national system of education, and that offers a curriculum which is different from that in the host country*' (Black & Armstrong, 1995, p. 27). In essence, an international school is the 'third culture' in which many TCKs are immersed and in which they find comfort, security, and a sense of shared identity. The significance of the third culture is therefore critical and has been shown to help TCKs thrive in their international environment (Sears, 2011; Tsumagari, 2010), largely because it provides them with a sense of belonging in relationship to others of a similar background (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Consequently, it is imperative that teachers' and staff are knowledgeable, and willing to act on their knowledge, about the issues facing TCKs so that they are responsive to their needs within the context of the learning and teaching environment. Indeed, research demonstrates that there are many factors that affect

TCKs resilience that impacts their academic performance, and social and emotional wellbeing as both children and adults (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Weeks, Weeks, & Willis-Muller, 2010). Yet, collective understanding of these issues is lacking, particularly from the perspective of the parents of TCKs enrolled in international schools in terms of the social, emotional and psychological needs of their children and how international school staff can best address their needs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STAFF

Despite the growth in size and diversity of international schools in Asia (Ang & Kwok, 2012; Cartus, 2012), Holderness (2002) argues that little formal research has been undertaken on international school teachers and staff. For example, a small number of studies have focused on methods to recruit teachers and turnover (e.g. Cambridge, 2002) and occupational satisfaction (e.g., Schechter & Tschannen-Moran, 2006; Scott & Dinham, 2003), with fewer studies examining the ongoing professional development needs of teachers, staff, and school administrators in international school settings (e.g., Alviar-Martin & Ho, 2011). Bunnell (2005a) suggests that few international schools offer a comprehensive induction-training program for new teachers, and Hayden (2002, p. 117) comments that *'no specific training is provided to international school staff ... before they embark upon their international school experience.'* Additionally, *no* studies of a multilevel nature have examined professional development in international schools from the perspective of teachers, staff and parents. One possible reason for this gap is the contractual nature of international school appointments, where short-term and fixed-tenure contracts can result in professional development neither being offered nor requested (Holderness, 2002). This is in contrast to Hardman's (2001) findings which show that the main motivator for joining an international school is 'professional advancement'. Hence, the concept of professional development in the international school setting appears to be of increasing importance (Richards, 2002).

Our interest in the professional development of teachers and staff stems from the well documented research linking quality professional development and quality learning and teaching environments (Holderness, 2002; Raban et al., 2007; Rodd, 2006). This research has consistently demonstrated that the professional development of teachers and staff is the cornerstone of excellence, wherein ongoing professional development contributes to the optimal development of children, and reflects the quality of the curriculum and pedagogy children are immersed in. Adapting from Evers, Kreijns, Van de Heijden and Gerrichhauzen (2011), teachers' professional development is defined as authentic participation in professional learning sessions including training, reading, dialoguing, experimenting, reflecting, and collaborative activities, which can be both formally delivered and informally experienced as on-the-job work integrated learning.

Professional development in the past decade has evolved to a participant driven approach, focusing on process driven reflective practice and capacity building (e.g. Robinson & Carrington, 2002). This represents an intentional shift towards a constructivist approach to professional development, placing the teacher or staff member at the centre of these activities. Such an approach supports teachers and staff in constructing their own knowledge and competencies for the context of their particular professional learning community. It also highlights the importance of collegial reflective dialogue in the workplace and is compatible with a focus on continuous lifelong learning for continuous improvement. Staff narratives of reflective practice provide the platform for capacity building. Resonating with the shift towards reflective professional development, this process supports teachers and staff to engage as reflective practitioners in reflective action: to build on and from their experiences; and to be actively engaged in developing theories that they can use in practice (Gould & Baldwin, 2004). Reflective action focuses on ongoing learning for continuous improvement.

WHY ASIA?

We have focused our study on international school staff in Asia because of the recent shift in global economic power to this region (Chan, 2014; Dobbs et al., 2011; Roach, 2009; White, 2011; Yu-Chuang), which has seen a steady increase not only in the number of people temporarily migrating to Asia as expatriates (Bashin & Cheng, 2002; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2013; KPMG, 2009; Osman-Gani & Tan, 2005), but also resulted in Asia dominating the international school market worldwide (Ang & Kwok, 2012; Cartus, 2012). The result of such escalating globalization, along with advances in travel, technology and communications, has generated increasing opportunities for people to live and work in many of Asia's modernized cities, two of which are the focus of this study. Singapore, for example, is a politically stable city-state in South East Asia with a multi-racial ethnic population, and an equally diverse expatriate population (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2013). Fuelling the need for the more than 30 international schools in Singapore (P. Lee, 2013) is the 7,000 multinationals that operate there (Ministry of Manpower, 2012), its high quality of living (Mercer, 2013), and an increasing number of executive-level expatriate residents (from 15 percent of the total population in 1997 to 22 percent by 2011 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011; Wong, 1997). Shanghai, on the other hand, boasts a burgeoning executive-level expatriate population resulting from over 50,000 new MNCs entering the Chinese market every year (Farrell & Grant, 2005; Ping & Hongmiao, 2011; Taylor, 2007), of which most cannot be staffed with local Chinese employees due to a lack of required skills and experience (Cartus, 2010). Shanghai remains the top destination globally for MNCs sending long-term international assignees abroad on assignments of 3 years duration or more (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2013), including both intra-regional and inter-regional expatriates (e.g., Goby, Ahmed, Annavarjula, Ibrahim, & Osman-Gani, 2002; Kuhlmann & Hutchings, 2010).

As the demand for expatriates in Asia increases, the necessity for international schools to cater for the children of expatriates (TCKs) has become critical (Siong, 2012; Tan, 2011; Yamato & Bray, 2006). This is due, in part to the growing numbers of children now entering international schools in Asia, resulting from the ‘normalization’ of global mobility as a typical and expected part of one’s career progression. It is also, in part, due to the improved quality of international schooling options, including the growing popularity of, and demand for, the *International Baccalaureate* (IB), which has subsequently negated the necessity for many expatriates to send their children to boarding school or to return to their home-country to ensure a satisfactory education. Research on international education over the past 20 years has nonetheless focused predominantly on South American, African, and European perspectives (Langford, 1998; MacDonald, 2006), with fewer studies exploring international schooling in Asia (e.g., Cartus, 2008; Tanu, 2010; Yamato & Bray, 2006). We contend it is necessary to strengthen the empirical research on international schooling in Asia to assist international school staff in their career development.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory informs the professional development focus for international school teachers and staff working with TCKs. Bronfenbrenner classified the ecological system as comprising five discrete yet interconnected nested subsystems that interact with the developing person’s own professional and personal development. These organized subsystems, representing different contexts in society, are classified as the *micro-system*, *meso-system*, *exo-system*, *macro-system*, and *chrono-system* (see Table 1). The theory sets the direction for action at various system levels (micro-, meso-, macro-, exo- and chrono-) in the international school setting. We position the individual child (TCK) at the centre of the bio-ecological system, in this case the microsystem where the developing child is at the centre of the nested systems. The microsystem then sits

within a meso-system where international school teachers and staff working with TCKs are located. In this way, the developing international school staff member is positioned as part of the ecological system (in the meso-system), who may be active in one system or may never have entered that system, but the environmental events in each of the systems influences and reinforces what happens or does not happen in the developing professional's schema. In other words, what occurs in terms of TCK professional development (i.e., the quality, depth, frequency and duration of sessions) influences the capacity of the international school staff member to respond to the needs of the individual child (TCK). In this study, we focus on the micro- and meso-systems as being particularly relevant, noting that the exo-system has important links between TCKs, teachers, staff, parents and parental employment in the host country, and the macro-system represents host country cultural elements. Importantly, what happens at each level of the five interconnected systems influences the quality of professionalism that international school staff emanate when working with TCKs.

[INSERT TABLE 1]

The process integrating various subsystems resides at the *meso-system*. Interactions between home and school or between TCKs and teachers and staff reflect the correlational nature of these systems. The *exo-system* represents the links between the microsystem and the society that indirectly influences the mindset of international school teachers and other staff. The education system, neighbourhood, community and workplace settings are factors present at this level. The *macro-system* represents the overarching cultural orientations, beliefs and values across various socioeconomic, political and educational backgrounds of host countries. Finally the *chrono-system* adds the time dimension - change (e.g., global financial crisis) and constancy - occurring across single lifetimes and historical time. We integrate Bronfenbrenner's ecological system with our findings later in the paper.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We justify the study on the basis that how to respond to the needs of TCKs in international schools, in general, remains an under-researched field of study that has not been adequately explored and is not well understood. Building on existing literature (e.g. Evers et al., 2011; Sears, 2011), the study is salient in informing the professional development agenda for teachers and staff in the international school context, particularly in Asia (e.g., Alviar-Martin & Ho, 2011). Three specific research questions are outlined:

1. How do international school teachers, staff and parents define TCKs?
2. To what extent is it perceived that international school teachers and staff have experience with, and exposure to, TCK professional development and learning?
3. What do international school teachers, staff, and parents prioritise in terms of TCK professional development?

METHODOLOGY

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the methodology having its roots in phenomenology, holding “*that human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality, but rather that they come to interpret and understand their world by formulating their own biographical stories into a form that makes sense to them*” (Brocki & Wearden, 2006p. 88). As such, this study concentrated on international school teachers, staff and parent participants, and the interpretation of their lived experiences about TCK professional development training. IPA methodology recognizes the participants’ expert yet subjective knowledge and experiences and the research team’s interpretation of these experiences, with the interpretative role of researchers being central to their reflections, analysis and construction of new knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Finlay, 2013).

Focus groups were used as the means of gathering data, utilizing a schedule of semi-structured questions to guide the group discussion. From September 2011 to December 2012, 34 teachers, 33 staff, and 48 parents at three international schools in Singapore and Shanghai

volunteered to participate in 25 focus groups. Given the limited time teachers have available to participate in outside activities, this methodology is seen as most appropriate as data can be collected quickly and efficiently over a short period of time. Focus groups can also facilitate better quality data collection where individuals may be reluctant to share or disclose their views and opinions in one-on-one settings (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008).

Procedure

Participants were recruited via email invitation disseminated by a senior member of staff at each school to facilitate access. An invitation letter outlining the project details was attached to an email invitation, along with a consent form. Teachers, staff and parents volunteering to participate indicated their interest and availability to the senior staff member at the school, who then informed the research team. Staff participants ranged from active full-time teaching staff, counselors, subject teachers, learning support, admissions, and heads of departments. Parent participants were also included. All participants were drawn from across the primary and secondary schools. The teachers, staff, and parents can be expected to be well-informed about both professional development training and international schools.

Focus groups for teachers and staff were conducted in English and held immediately after school hours (i.e., 3.30pm or 4.00pm), on the school premises, and were recorded. Focus groups for parents were conducted in English, held immediately after classes commenced and before classes concluded for the day (i.e., 9.30am and 2.30pm) to facilitate school drop off and pick up times, on the school premises, and were recorded. Focus groups ran for between 1 hour and up to 3 hours each, each being facilitated by a member of the research team.

Respondents

Participants were drawn from three international schools in Asia (one in Singapore and two schools in Shanghai), all of whom volunteered their participation. In Singapore, 10 teachers, 10 staff and 8 parents participated in 4 focus groups, for a total of 28 respondents. The

international school employs 420 staff members and has an enrolment of 2600 students. In Shanghai, 17 teachers, 21 staff and 28 parents at school #1 participated in 17 focus groups, for a total of 66 respondents. The international school employs 170 staff members and has an enrolment of 1300 students. At Shanghai school #2, 7 teachers, 2 staff and 12 parents participated in 4 focus groups, for a total of 21 respondents. The international school employs 165 staff members and has an enrolment of 1200 students. Table 2 provides a detailed outline of the sample characteristics at each school.

[INSERT TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE]

Focus Group Question Development

Focus group questions were based on a literature review and the research questions which were used as an “orienting framework” (Creswell, 2003, p. 30). To assess how TCKs are defined (research question one), two items based on the work of Pollock and Van Reken (2009) and Useem et al. (1963) were used to explore the respondents views about: (a) their understanding as to what a TCK is; and, (b) their personal experience as TCKs/ATCKs themselves. To assess the extent to which teachers and staff had actual or perceived prior exposure to TCK professional development, three items were used based on the work of Raban et al. (2007) and Rodd (2006). A sample item includes, *‘In what ways do you feel prepared to teach in a TCK classroom? Can you provide examples of a positive, and negative, experience?’* Depending on the answer given, further questions were asked to extrapolate important information relating to specific experiences, such as induction or off-site training. In terms of prioritizing what is most needed in relation to TCK professional development, we used a three-item scale based on the work of Evers et al. (2011) and Alviar-Martin & Ho (2011) that asked respondents: (a) what would better assist them to respond to and cater for the needs of TCKs in their school/class; and (b) the extent to which their prior or current TCK professional development is relevant and appropriate to prepare them to teach in

an international school. A sample item is, *'How can professional development be designed to cater for the inclusion of TCKs within school/class?'*

Analysis

Data were analysed using NVIVO v9.0. Transcripts were content analysed and common themes identified. The research team followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) systematic six-phase guide to ensure the transcript analysis process was methodologically and theoretically sound. Initially the research team familiarized themselves with data and recorded first impressions. Patterns were assigned initial codes, prior to being organized into potential themes. A thematic map was then generated, leading to specifying and describing three key themes (each with sub-themes) as determined by the three research questions. Throughout the process, analysis was recursive rather than linear as the research team actively moved back and forth between the phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Finlay, 2013). To limit researcher bias and facilitate greater reliability and validity of data from single-rater response focus group data, the researchers coded independently to facilitate a process of inter-rater reliability, coming together post-analysis to discuss discrepancies and agree on common themes. The final phase involved linking the thematic analysis process with the initial research questions and the relevant literature.

FINDINGS

What it Means to be a TCK

Staff identified with the definition of TCKs as children who are internationally mobile, blending home culture(s) with host culture(s), as being *"global nomads"*, as having *"multi-cultural identities,"* as *"belonging everywhere and nowhere"*, who *"grow up not knowing exactly where to call home, but has several places to call home,"* and as *"constantly moving between cultures as global hippies."* There was a continuum of perspectives regarding the transient nature of TCKs cultural experiences and this impact on TCKs themselves as being

“without an anchor anywhere”, particularly for parents of TCKs who worried that their child would one day say, *“Mum, I don't know who I am.”* As one parent explained, *“I don't want that for my kids. For me, that's my concern.”*

Nature of TCKs

Many respondents commented that every student will have diverse life experiences and multicultural immersions, a unique history and a distinctive communication pattern (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2014), and that being an effective teacher of TCKs is adapting to this diversity. A significant part of this adaptation is cultural intentionality, noting that differences will exist between students' with relation to self-concept, self-esteem, self-acceptance, peer relations, altruism, and autonomy. Staff noted that some TCKs demonstrated a capacity to function positively despite life challenges, overcoming distress and bouncing back from adverse and traumatic events, taking to international life as one teacher in Shanghai called it, *“like fish to water ... the children just adapt to situations”*. This mindset is referred to as resilience, where, *“confidence is something that I really notice in our kids ... how they talk to people, not just each other but to adults as well, they're very comfortable with themselves.”*

As one teacher explained:

How they do it, I think, is incredible. You look at these very small children and in an amazingly short space of time they're able to be comfortable in a new environment. I mean, there are 700 children in this primary school; to feel comfortable within a week when you're five years old amongst 700 children and 100 new staff, I think that they're incredibly resilient (Staff, Shanghai #2)

Others noted that *“you think about the experiences that are in that one room and it's amazing what each child brings,”* whereas another commented, *“whilst they may have a great many privileges outside of school, they're still excited at the idea of a plastic carry bag that is going to be a science experiment!”*

TCKs Multicultural Worldview

Findings show there is a need to cultivate a basic understanding and to be ready to work with TCKs with cross-cultural issues and cultural differences. Part of this involves formulating an understanding and appreciation of the worldview of TCKs. Yet, most of the respondents were in agreement that the intercultural experiences of TCKs were rarely acknowledged. They further maintained that the challenges TCKs faced with blending their home culture(s) and host culture(s) within the international school setting were misunderstood and in many instances, discounted by international school staff, where one parent stated, “*the cultural difference is not as acknowledged or celebrated within this school as it perhaps could be,*” while another said, “*the whole idea of international mindedness is never explored because there is no time, or it is not something that is expressed.*” As one teacher explained:

International mindedness [is] the only learner profile that will establish all of these things we’re talking about with TCKs. But without school context, without that vision and understanding, we will always come up against hurdles every time we look at this concept. It’s very, very slow moving. It was evident throughout all of our evaluations and our authorisation processes, that that’s something that we struggle with. The cost of [not doing] it is the identity crisis (Teacher, Singapore)

Prior Experience With, and Exposure To, TCK Professional Development

Findings indicate that there is no clear answer as to how international school teachers’ and staff receive their professional training and learning/professional development in relation to TCKs, and then translating learning into their subject/classroom teaching and assessment. Mirroring other findings in relation to general professional development (e.g., Hayden, 2002), teachers and staff in our study did not perceive that they are provided with specific and relevant formal training to help them acquire expertise on managing TCKs, with much of it provided as surface learning, and information given as facts with limited time for meaning making, critical analysis and reflection. School-sponsored workshops were seen as ‘*very informal, for example, staff induction on TCKs [was] sitting in a room full of 20 other newbies ... it was a 20-minute conversation.*’ Some staff reflected that ‘*it doesn’t provide a lot of answers, [but] it starts people on that journey of inquiring into what does it mean. We need*

to question how does that impact or influence our practice, our thinking.’ Others stated that the TCK phenomenon is trivialized and not given the importance it deserves, instead being relegated to ‘a very nice one-day celebration’ where the festivities amount to ‘okay, everyone bring a flag and, okay, bring something from your country.’ The general sentiment is that the TCK phenomenon is ‘a given’ and is not taken seriously by the school administration. TCK professional development training is, therefore, considered a ‘non-event’ being cursorily addressed: ‘It’s one day. What are you going to do for the rest of the days that the kids are here ... to make a school international?’ One staff member summed up the frustration voiced by many respondents by explaining:

This [TCKs] is not just like any other subject area. [It] deserves a certain amount of time and resourcing ... in terms of identifying a cultural identity that is yours. I don’t think though that it’s seen through that lens (Staff, Singapore).

Another suggested:

There’s the old expression which is very big with the IB organisation in terms of celebrating the five F’s: food, fashion, flags, famous people, and festivals. It’s very superficial, and trying to get people to go deeper into it cannot be done, for example, in a PYP 6 or 7-week unit of inquiry. There needs to be something that really takes root and becomes a part of the culture of the school (Staff, Singapore).

The lack of formal training is in conflict with Clifford & Montgomery’s (2014, p. 41) view that teachers in international schools are “*transformative intellectuals*’ whose pedagogy develops critical literacy and active citizenship in their students”. In the absence of formal training, the challenge for teachers and staff, then, appears to be to rely on their own education (e.g., post-graduate courses), experiences, and judgment, and to “*really make an effort*” by identifying their own awareness and education as essential in their transformation as educators of TCKs working in international schools. As parents observed, characteristics of high quality international school teachers includes “*prior experience teaching internationally*” and “*being a TCK themselves*” as well as “*connecting at an emotional level with kids*” and

“having life skills, a sense of adventure and being a risk taker; they also need a higher degree of empathy.” As this parent explains,

Part of getting what the TCK is about is just being a great teacher who can understand each child’s needs individually and cater to that (Parent, Shanghai #1)

Teachers and staff prioritize cultural differences, including values and styles of learning, as critical. Others, including parents, are motivated and compelled to engage in self-education and lifelong learning (‘on-the-job training’) about TCKs to better prepare themselves rather than being *“thrown in the deep end”* or experiencing *“a complete baptism of fire”* by not understanding that *“certain nationalities have very strong traits”* and *“being culturally sensitive is critical.”* As one teacher explained:

It’s pretty much up to the individual teacher to take the initiative to try and address these things. In terms of a formal mechanism that not only educates staff but educates the community and also supports these kids? It doesn’t exist yet ... the parents email us all the time, they will just come and pop in and have a chat, that’s the only avenue that we have at the moment (Teacher, Singapore)

Several parents and teachers viewed the lack of TCK professional development as a deeper school leadership issue, noting a disconnect between their ideological understanding of an international school and the reality for TCKs. The position taken by Clifford & Montgomery (2014, p. 41) was a point of contention where,

critical theorists see educational institutions as powerful places of social, economic and cultural reproduction ... and have argued that educational institutions must not be seen as extensions of the marketplace but must be democratic public spaces for critical inquiry and meaningful dialogue.

Similar thinking was expressed by this respondent:

They call themselves ‘international schools’ but actually they’re not catering for the international child that moves all the time. Very often, they cater for the child that’s coming from England or from the US and is going to that country again, that will stay here for a few years then is presumably going back to their home system. That is where I have a big problem (Parent, Shanghai #1)

Teachers Identity

The line of questioning about prior exposure to TCK professional development led to an unexpected result, wherein many teachers and staff seemed to struggle with their professional identity as a teacher or mentor of TCKs, and more broadly, how others (e.g., parents, administrators, and TCKs) perceived their role. Some voiced that parents view teachers and staff as ‘pastoral carers’ particularly when TCKs are facing peer challenges, whereas others perceived that parents saw them as knowledgeable ‘worldwide curriculum experts’ able to immediately adjust a program in response to a particular child’s academic needs.

Consequently, teachers and staff perceived that their identity was informed by their lived experiences, their professional training and qualifications, and by parents expectations, along with a further expectation that faculty will behave as the identity suggests. The challenge however is that a teacher “*may not have necessarily claimed any such identity but, nevertheless, the identity is assigned [such that when teachers] do not meet that expectation, then satisfaction is decreased*” (McArdle, 2013, p. 9). Some teachers in China, for example, perceived themselves as “*a lower class of expat because we are the [parents’] worker and we don't live in the big fancy housing compound*”, with another saying,

we are all their employees ... they’ve paid for a driver to take them out, and paid for an ayi [maid] to clean their house, so I’m just another employee, [the parents] outsourced their education to me and their child isn’t performing so I cop it (Staff, Shanghai #1).

Many parents were seen by staff as “*bossy*” and “*demanding*” with a sense that they had to “*bend over backwards .. because they’re our clients.*” Others felt a genuine struggle between their school as ideology- versus market-driven (i.e., those whose mission is to further international understanding, cooperation, and to develop an enhanced view of the world versus those that are established to cater to the needs of expatriate and local communities that would like an alternative to the national education system; Tsumagari, 2010).

Induction Training

Teachers, staff, and parents prioritized start-of-year induction programs for staff, TCKs and their families as a highly significant and impactful part of their training. Most, however, were of the opinion that induction was a token gesture, with orientation being “*very superficial*”, and with many “*never having had an induction about the culture, the ethos, the language.*” As one teacher said,

This is my third posting. I think it’s fair to say none of the schools really have a system implemented that is effective in preparing the teacher for the children that they are dealing with in the different cultures and dealing with different nationalities. I had no training, no preparation, nothing (Teacher, Shanghai #1).

Prioritizing Professional Development for Teachers and Staff

What do teachers, staff and parents prioritize as important in relation to TCK professional development? Five major themes were identified.

Curriculum and Pedagogy Training

Knowledge of, and familiarity with, the curriculum TCKs have come from was repeatedly noted as a challenge for teachers and staff across all three schools, resulting in gaps in students learning, particularly when some skip a grade. Teachers expressed a need for “*a lot of scaffolding*” to help new students transition, particularly “*for those entering the IB program which is quite intense.*” Teachers and staff noted that helpful in this regard is adequate information from the admissions department about new students in terms of “*the school they were in before and about their current achievement assessment, behavior, other side notes, what have you.*” Also helpful would be a fulltime learning advisor to work with TCKs, families and staff in customizing curriculum to needs to enhance inclusion and integration of students within the curriculum.

Facilitating TCK Identity Development

One of the biggest challenges teachers and staff face is supporting TCK identity development as students navigate their sense of belonging to each other, the school community, and the

broader cultural environment in which they live. Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009, p. 756)

maintain that TCKs learn their identity,

by ‘catching it’ from the environment surrounding them ... which for TCKs means that they ‘catch’ many different cues, cultural rules, behaviour, and values from the various cultures they have experienced.

Finding a sense of identity then becomes a difficult, confusing and a “*disorienting*” task, particularly when, as parents explain, “*on UN day they ask ‘where are you from?’ She will say Hong Kong and I will say ‘But you are Indian!’* For other parents, there is a sense of fatality about their children’s lives, and a “*pros and cons*” approach wherein they accept, “*this is how it’s going to be for certain things.*” As one parent explains,

You get on with life. But there’s two ways [to handle it]. You get on with everything that you’re facing, or on the other hand, you’ve got escapism, because the moment you move, you can just leave everything that you didn’t like behind ... instead of facing it. You get out of unpleasant neighbours, bullies at school. I try to put a positive spin on it. But on the other hand, you don’t learn to face certain issues either (Parent, Shanghai #1)

Findings show clearly that TCKs cultivate knowledge of the beliefs and values of different cultures and develop an ‘intercultural identity’, feeling equally at home across different cultures (Moore & Barker, 2012). But the feeling of ‘*homelessness [being] determined by your place of birth, your parents identity and we’re you’re currently living*’ can present challenges to staff:

I see it from this one student, she says it straight out, she sees herself coasting from one thing to another and she can’t truly and internally represent who she is. She is struggling with that as a concept, which means that she is always experimenting with different belief systems, different cultural values, She can’t relate or want to. What is she meant to do. She is continually struggling with that in her head but she does know that in the paradigm of things there is a western culture that is a dominant running system, and then there’s a sub-culture that she may belong to (Teacher, Shanghai #1)

To overcome this, respondents identified that authentic experiences with other TCKs often provides an inner sanctum where they feel a sense of belonging (Fail et al., 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). As Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009, p. 767) explain,

through interactions with peers who had similar lifestyles, autobiographies' experiences were normalized. It helped them not to feel so different and on the outside ... it was a place where they felt like an insider.

This sense of connectivity was reflected in the significant role of social media (e.g., email, instant messaging) in maintaining the connectivity of TCKs that move between international schools and cultures across the globe:

They Skype all the time, because in Shanghai everyone lives all over the place, in the evening they sit on Skype and a few of the boys moved back to Bangkok. They say they know what's going on with him because he's Skyping all the time. So their friends are becoming like a conversation of Skype every single night (Parent, Shanghai #2)

Pastoral Care and Counselling Support

Resilience was prioritized by staff and parents as a mindset that TCKs need to develop as this supports them with cultural identity development. Resilience is defined “*a dynamic process whereby individuals exhibit positive behavioural adaptation when they encounter significant adversity, trauma, threats, or even significant sources of stress*” (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000 as cited in Ivey et al., 2014, p. 9). Respondents identified that staff being trained in interviewing and counseling microskills would be helpful (Ivey et al., 2014). Frustration was nonetheless evident at the absence or lack of adequate counseling support and pastoral care available for students, staff and parents to TCKs deal with the high mobility and transitional nature of their peers which is an inherent part of the international school context. As these parents said,

Oftentimes I think the emotional issues are so complex in an international school environment that it really needs an expert that's dedicated to dealing with it (Parent, Shanghai #2)

I would like to see more emotional support, whether it's the school employing somebody to do that or whether it's circle time in the classroom, maybe just half an hour a week or it can be the teacher that might have something from an expert – “here's this week's discussion, this is the discussion we're going to have today” (Parent, Shanghai #2)

Nearly all respondents indicated it is important that teachers and staff are knowledgeable about the grief and loss TCKs experience that are associated with repatriation and

reassignment. Some teachers and parents sighted examples of TCKs choosing not to interact with peers as they were *'tired of always saying goodbye'*. Other parents noted the significance of having public farewell rituals and *"open discussions with kids about the grief process of moving"*. Suicide was noted by some respondents as an extreme outcome of students' inability to deal with the grief and loss associated with their ongoing transience and constant mobility.

Parental Involvement

Nearly all teachers and staff identified that their own TCK professional development would be enhanced by training that specifically enables them to competently support the parents of TCKs who, in their view, *'have got no idea!'* about their child/ren's TCK-ness. While staff recognise that their client per se is the student, they are nonetheless aware that spillover of issues from home to school is a reality, thus, on the basis that *'you've got to sort yourself out before you're any help to the child'*, parental support and viewing parents as 'partners' is seen as critical to ensure better adjusted students:

You've got to know how to communicate with parents because you have a lot of very highly qualified mothers mostly or trailing spouse husbands who have nothing to do because they can't work and so this is their life (Teacher, Shanghai #2)

What is needed is a partnership between the school, teachers, staff, and the family at home.

What emerged as important is a formal and more systematic approach in the form of curriculum training for parents, as well as general training about life with TCKs. A further critical aspect is clear and supportive communication between parents, TCKs and school staff in relation to the students welfare and other significant events in their lives that impact on *"children's behaviour, not only mood swings but even down to their work"* – events such as changes in daily routines (e.g., absence of one or both parents due to travel), upcoming repatriations and re-assignments, and family deaths or grandparent visits). This is seen as essential by teachers and staff because *"the teacher plays a role in looking after the parents when they come to a new school"* and *"if the parents are anxious and stressed out, their*

anxiety is reflected in the children and the children are therefore unhappy.” This skilled communication with families from multicultural backgrounds is not counselling, but rather as teacher communication. Ideally, teachers need to develop their capacity as culturally competent communicators. Hence, communication training is key. Parents, on the other hand, were appreciative of the time devoted to education sessions conducted by staff to introduce them to the pedagogy of the language and mathematics curriculum in the international school, being ‘very happy when the school organized maths and English forums and told us what they teach because they realized that everyone comes from a different background’.

DISCUSSION

On the whole, findings in the study point to a level of overall professional development training in relation to TCKs that seems to disappoint school teachers, staff and parents at three international schools in Asia. Only surface level training appears to be offered in the form of tacit acceptance of information and rushing to cover ad-hoc and informal material but providing little content depth. More formal and specialized training is desired and needed to build teachers’ and staff capacity in the international school context. Confirming prior research (e.g., Hayden, 2002; Holderness, 2002), issues that were not adequately addressed include staff start-of-year induction, identity lifespan and cultural issues, pastoral care, TCK emotional wellbeing, international mindedness curriculum education, and TCK transitions via repatriation and reassignment. On a more positive note, findings provide an interesting perspective on professional development training for international school teachers and staff, which emerges as multifaceted and uniquely specialized in comparison to teachers in non-international school settings.

Following Hayden’s (2002) line of thinking, we adapt Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to the international school context, where the TCK is developing within a nested system of various ecological systems of family, school, neighbor, community, and

culture. TCKs own developmental characteristics and developmental stages are central to this developmental-ecological model (see Table 1). For example, the *micro-system* is the everyday face-to-face contact with cultural orientations of the family environment, international school environment, neighborhood, local community and peer group. Papalia & Feldman (2012, p. 395) refer to this process as cultural socialization wherein ‘*practices teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage, promote cultural customs and traditions, and foster racial/ethnic and cultural pride.*’ As Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009, p. 756) explain, cultural socialization is important because “*TCKs are expected to change and adapt their cultural rules as they navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain*”. In this context, international school staff play a critical role in facilitating cultural socialization via their capacity to develop within the student ‘protective factors’ that buffer TCKs from the risk of becoming alienated within each system they encounter. These protective factors include a positive mindset to risk and adversity, high self esteem, emotional regulation and pro-social behavior, positive involvement with social activities, frequent engagement in shared activities with parents and peers, and parental resilience, among others (Counts, Buffington, Chang-Rios, Rasmussen, & Preacher, 2010). Parental resilience is identified as particularly significant wherein investment in parent education, connectivity, and support by international school staff is likely to result in building a strong school community across various stakeholders (Fail, 2011).

Missing in all the international schools we studied, however, is acknowledgment, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity for teachers and staff working with TCKs via: (1) a purposeful start-of-year induction program; (2) curriculum and pedagogy training; (3) facilitating TCK identity development; (4) pastoral care and counseling support; (5) parental involvement; and (6) managing repatriation and re-assignment of students and staff. Professional learning sessions that analyses the literature on TCKs (e.g., Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) by critically examining TCK identity, language,

learning, and assessment approaches and systems in home and host countries compared with the current international school (e.g., Peterson & Plamondon, 2009) are effective ways of engaging in TCK professional development.

The meso-system is also important as its relationship to the microsystem influences where teachers and staff develop their professional identity as both a person-in-community and a self-in-relation-to-others in the meso-system, where “*their identity has been formed through multiple relations in the family, community, and broader society*” (Ivey et al., 2014, p. 57). While these relationships socialize international school staff into adopting roles within the cross-cultural school environment, their identity evolves in relation to experiences within their home and host cultures, including their exposure to appropriate professional development training. Also critical is building an international school characterized by what Adler (1977, p. 26) refers to as the “*multicultural man*”, where staff and students’ identity is “*adaptive, temporary and open to change, rather than based on belonging to a particular culture.*” Formalized professional development to imbed the TCK phenomenon into the school culture, and the curriculum and pedagogy, using the international mindedness attribute as a foundational construct, was suggested as critical by respondents.

By examining the ‘lived experience’ of the participants, this paper contributes to the heretofore ‘missing voice’ of international school staff as career actors in the international labor market, including the perspectives and expectations of student’s parents’ as career co-referents (Fail, 2011). Additionally, by gaining a deeper knowledge of the needs of TCKs in international schools, the study aims to enhance our collective understanding of the motives, challenges and relative success factors pertinent to international school staff arising from their international school experience, including the extent to which professional development training helps them to be effective educators in the broader context of their international working lives and specifically within the TCK classroom.

Practical Implications

On the basis that all professional development for international school staff is directed toward supporting the TCK to develop within a complex ecology of nested systems - with many actions originating in the microsystem, residing in the mesosystem, and being influenced by reciprocal relationships with all the systems - the following processes and strategies are recommended. First, some of the challenges facing TCKs relate to their struggles with cultural identity, friendship, and grief and loss, with teachers and staff indicating they are not adequately trained to respond appropriately or to offer the correct level of support to students and their parents. Appointing a culturally competent counselor to support TCKs, teachers and families develop cultural sensitivity and empathy, cultural identity, intercultural communication competence, sense of belonging and feelings of connectedness, is essential. School counsellors can provide support with curriculum matching and identifying gaps between international school systems as well as facilitate appropriate personality, behavioral, cognitive, aptitude, and achievement assessment to accurately profile each student. Additionally, when an international school represents a national curriculum (such as the schools in our study), diversity among staff is critical to ensure a broader representation of nationalities and cultures beyond the school's home-country culture, including the employment of local (host-country) staff and curriculum specialists. People from different backgrounds who work together, engage and communicate with one another demonstrate inclusiveness as an important international competency. Staff pastoral care is equally important as a means of providing professional collegial support and the opportunity to share stories and experiences in relation to teaching TCKs. .y

Limitations and Future Directions

This study intentionally examined international schools in Asia due to the minimal research on this topic. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that this study is focused on co-educational

international schools in Asia which limits the generalizability of our findings to international schools in other regions, noting that there would likely be cultural and language differences. We also recognize that the focus has been predominantly on TCKs, thereby ignoring the issues pertinent to cross-cultural kids (CCKs) and children of a multi-cultural background that are citizens of the host-country also enrolled in international school (P. Lee, 2013; Van Reken & Bethel, 2005). Extending the research to account for the various types of international school students (as opposed to only TCKs) may be beneficial. To address these limitations, future research would ideally investigate a range of schools in other locations in Asia (e.g., Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta) to draw comparisons across language and cultural differences, different national curriculums, as well as various international communities. Furthermore, a focus on student perceptions as to their needs and how these can be met via professional development training for teachers and staff would provide further insights to learn firsthand how TCKs' global mobility has impacted their cultural identity, intercultural communication competence, social and emotional wellbeing, sense of belonging, and academic progression.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from our findings that teachers, staff and parents identify the international school as having responsibility to provide staff with relevant in-depth professional development training to help them to support, understand, respond to, and engage with TCKs. This professional development needs to encourage deep learning, promoting understanding and reflection, and connecting new knowledge with existing knowledge. It needs to be purposeful, meaningful, and linked to the real life world of TCKs in international schools, transparent, and aimed at building their capacity and enhancing their careers as international educators. This culture of deep professional learning would target and involve all the levels of the Bronfenbrenner model. Interactions between these subsystems will significantly influence and

build the capacity of teachers and staff working with TCKs. The aim of the study was to examine the lived experience of teachers, staff and parents in regard to the needs of TCKs in three international schools in Asia. The findings constitute an important step towards understanding how international schools can help their faculty to acquire a specialized set of skills and competencies to effectively respond to the multicultural challenges associated with the mobility of TCKs. In doing so, the TCK phenomenon can be more authentically reflected in the curriculum to become part of the culture of a school community, which will ultimately influence the overall wellbeing and wholeness of the TCK child.

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Table 1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System of Subsystems

Sub-system	Characteristics
microsystem	Represents the developing TCK student. It refers to the most direct agents of social change that influence their paradigms, principles, beliefs and values.
mesosystem	Represents international school teachers’ everyday immediate environment in the host country in which they live and work. It includes interactions and relations with TCKs and their immediate families, education administration personnel, colleagues, employers, and friends. Represents the interconnection of various microsystems, linking with direct change agents in the teachers’ micro subsystem. It may include links between TCKs and their families, TCKs within the class and school environment, and education administrators
exosystem	Signifies the layer in society in which the international school teacher is external and indirectly involved. Events in this system have the potential to interact and influence the teachers’ microsystem. Community engagement and education, parental employment, digital technology, and mass media are agents of change located at this level.
macrosystem	Denotes the overarching cultural ideologies and attitudes of the national, political, and economic systems. How is the international school teacher affected by living in the host country and teaching TCKs in the international school? This system underpins and influences all subsystems.
chronosystem	Provides an historical time dimension, representing events occurring over time that have shaped the growth and development of the environment in which the international school teacher lives (e.g., every day employment, place of residence, socioeconomic status, and family structure).

Table 2: Sample Characteristics

	Singapore	Shanghai #1	Shanghai #2	
	SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS			
Years in operation	21	11	12	
Classes offered	Prep-12	Prep-12	Prep-12	
Nationalities	50	48	59	
Gender	Co-educational	Co-educational	Co-educational	
Total Student Enrolment	2600	1300	1200	
Total Faculty (all staff)	420	170	165	
	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS			TOTAL
Focus Groups	4	17	4	25
Teachers	10	17	7	34
Staff	10	21	2	33
Parents	8	28	12	48
TOTAL	28	66	21	115