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Recruitment Decision Making among International Schools Teachers

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Recruitment Decision Making among International School Teachers

by

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Abstract

Effective recruitment of teachers is a vital part of school leadership. Currently, international school leaders lack theoretical guidance to explain why teachers may accept one job offer while rejecting another. This study examines the decision making of teachers when choosing to accept or reject a position with an international school. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What factors do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?
2. What processes do teachers use when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Twenty teachers examining job offers participated in this study. Each of these teachers participated in a think aloud interview while they considered one or more jobs offers. Verbal Protocol Analysis methods were used both to conduct these interviews and to analyze the resulting data. These teachers were found to attend most to their personal well-being, financial compensation, professional growth opportunities, and school quality. Teachers used both rational and intuitive evaluation approaches to evaluate offers. Approaches to gathering more information about the offering school and community proved important for teacher decision making.

Acknowledgements

This study would not be possible without the patient mentorship of my supervisor Dr. Gail Jardine. Thank you so much for your countless hours of work reading and rereading drafts. Your attentive editing and guidance gave me direction and helped to transform a mess of ideas into what this research is today. I am also immensely grateful to Dr. Eugene Kowch for his insightful questioning of my ideas and for pushing me to reach higher. I am also thankful for Dr. Sal Mendaglio for his attention to this research. Finally, I would also like to thank Dr. James Agarwal and Dr. Ruth Kane for their willingness to serve on my examination committee.

Dedication

For Jenn and Jaia.

Thank you for your love, support, and understanding.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teacher quality is the most important variable that school leadership can develop in order help students to achieve their learning goals (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Falch, 2007; Roberts, Mancuso, & Yoshida, 2010). A skilled teacher can both increase a student's performance in the short term as measured in year-end testing, and also impact them positively in the long-term as observed through greater college attendance rates and future earnings (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011). This is true in North American schools and also in the rapidly growing context of international schools. Ensuring that students have access to the most effective teacher available is a key task for school leaders everywhere. While teacher training, available system resources, and school culture can either contribute or detract from teacher effectiveness (Borko, 2004), excellent teachers are easier to hire than create anew each year (Darling-Hammond, 2000; TNTP, 2012). It is for this reason that recruiting skilled teachers is a vital task of effective school leadership (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Despite the importance of this task, there is no evidence to suggest that current recruitment practices used by international school leaders are informed by research. There is also no evidence suggesting that these school leaders understand the patterns and preferences that teachers employ when evaluating job offers. To address this need, this research uses verbal protocol analysis to evaluate think aloud interviews with twenty teachers as they actively

consider one or more job offers from international schools at Bangkok and Dubai during the spring of 2014. This analysis is used to develop guidance for school leaders, based upon the ways that teachers seeking positions within international schools evaluate competing offers. The guidelines presented here may help school leaders to adapt their recruitment practices to more effectively hire those they have identified as top educators.

The Importance of Teacher Recruitment

Every year, thousands of teachers leave their positions at international schools. These resignations are made in order to move to other international schools, return home to teach, or as a result of teachers leaving the profession (Mancuso, 2010; Odland, 2007). Replacing these teachers presents a challenge to school leaders because of the costs and efforts required in recruitment and induction of new staff members (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Falch, Rønning, & Strøm, 2008; Kitchenham & Chateauneuf, 2010). This is time and money that is diverted from other school operation or improvement measures and instead used on the constant cycle of hiring and training new teachers.

While the constant need to replace departing teachers is costly and difficult, this demand for teachers can present school leaders with the opportunity to improve the quality of teaching and learning that takes place at their school. All schools have turnover of teachers. If these openings are filled with the right candidates, they serve to strengthen a school rather than weaken it (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Recruiting new teachers is a chance to improve the school or to enact change by hiring highly-skilled teachers that will bring with them new ideas

(Burke, 2011). Utilizing effective teacher recruitment practices is a critical part of school leadership.

Unfortunately for many school leaders, their ability to hire the best applicants is too limited to view recruitment as positive opportunity for their organization (Mancuso, 2010). Instead, school leaders are often forced to hire less qualified or experienced teachers than desired. The challenge facing school leaders in today's increasingly competitive market for teachers is to improve their ability to attract and hire excellent teachers to replace those that depart their school each year. This goal is more easily attained when schools understand what factors and decision making processes are used by teacher applicants in selecting their next school.

The International School Context

This study is specifically concerned with the recruitment of teachers into positions with international schools. *International school* is a term applied to a variety of institutions. There is no widely agreed upon criteria to identify an international school (James, 2010). To focus the context of this study, the term international school is being used to refer to institutions engaged in K-12 education using a national (non-host country) or international curriculum for a student body that is primarily made up of expatriates. This definition is in alignment with previous research (Odland, 2007). Current estimates suggest that there are over 7000 international schools globally with new schools opening regularly to meet the growing demand from an increasingly globalized world (ISC Research Ltd., 2015).

International schools are most often independent institutions that are only loosely affiliated with other schools or groups (Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2001). While these truly independent schools continue to be the most popular model for the delivery of international education, the past 15 years has seen a handful of corporate school groups grow in size. The largest of these, GEMS Education, operates more than 70 schools in locations around the world (GEMS Education, 2015). Even within the various schools operated by this and other corporations, planning and decisions involving teacher recruitment practices are still localised within individual schools.

There is variety in the governance models used within international schools, but the most common of these structures is a single-board with the school leadership team reporting to that group. Depending on the school, this board can be made of parents, corporate owners and appointees, or governmental embassies or foreign affairs officials (Gillies, 2001). One key delineation between these structures is that some schools are not-for-profit while others are proprietary. Typically not-for-profit schools have been established by parent groups often with some assistance from governmental foreign affairs agencies to support the schooling of the children of their embassy employees and other expatriate families living in the host country. Despite the rapid growth of international schools as a whole over the past few decades, non-profit schools have not seen a noticeable increase in their numbers of schools or attending students (Keeling, 2013). This suggests that the vast majority of the growth in international education has been in for-profit schools.

The diverse nature of international schools is also evident in student populations. International schools can range from as small as a dozen to more than 3000 students. They may represent one nation or more than 40 (Mancuso, 2010).

In order to lend recognition and credibility to their programming, most schools are accredited by international bodies and they often offer externally regulated curricula such as the International Baccalaureate program or the American Advanced Placement classes (Gillies, 2001). In addition, some schools join one or more regional associations of international schools. These voluntary organizations allow for collaboration on professional development, inter-school student events, and other activities.

The diverse and nebulous structures taken by international schools have made studying them and applying common theory difficult (Odland, 2007). Despite this, we can find areas of common function and form and use these areas of commonality to begin to develop and apply new understandings to hiring practices. Among the common challenges facing these schools when attempting to hire teachers are the unreliability, costs and difficulty associated with hiring employees that are currently living at great distance from the school, the difficulty of assuring a prospective teacher of the value of a job and community when they have no practical way to experience it before accepting the position, and increasing competition for a highly mobile workforce (Cox, 2012).

Current International School Hiring Procedures

International school leaders use various recruitment measures to find and hire teachers for their schools. These different approaches are used depending on the background of the

teacher desired for the position, the relative attractiveness of the job compared to positions at other schools, and the recruitment budget available to the school leader. It has also been found that recruitment practices are heavily shaped by the cultural background of the school leader organizing the recruitment efforts (Canterford, 2009).

While it is impractical to examine all variations of recruitment practice among international schools in a doctoral thesis, the most common hiring practices used by high-performing international schools will be identified and discussed here to better understand and contextualize the phenomenon.

In most international schools, the board or other governing body sets a recruitment budget and then entrusts the school head to coordinate all decisions and actions for the recruitment of teachers. This authority is often further distributed by the school head to other members of the senior leadership team of the school including divisional principals and the deputy school head. For the purpose of this report, all of these professionals will be referred to as *school leaders* as their function in the recruitment process is often interchangeable depending on the particulars of their organization.

School policies typically call for school leaders to hire teachers on an initial two-year contract and renew those contracts on a year-to-year basis after that initial term. In most cases, school policy will require that teachers with expiring contracts inform the school of their intention to leave at the end of that school year or sign a new contract months before the end of the current school year. For most schools this re-sign or resign question is addressed during the month of December or early January (Mancuso, 2010). This commitment from teachers six or seven months before the end of the school year allows both the school leaders and teachers

to engage in the recruitment process with enough time to ensure that necessary logistical arrangements can be made before the start of the next school year. This period between the end of December, when teachers indicating their intentions to return or leave their current school, and April, when schools hope to have all positions filled for the upcoming school year, is widely accepted as the peak recruiting season (Shanghai American School, 2015).

International schools seek to hire teachers that have certification in their home jurisdiction. Prospective teachers are also expected to have experience in the curriculum used at the recruiting school or one that is deemed to be very similar (Shanghai American School, 2015). For example, an American school in China would likely be satisfied to recruit a Canadian trained and certified teacher that only has a teaching experience in Canada as the curriculum and pedagogical norms of the Canadian educational system are quite similar to those seen in America. The same school would be very unlikely to hire a teacher with experience only within domestic Chinese schools due to the differences in those educational contexts.

As there are usually very few if any high-quality, certified, and experienced teachers looking for work in the same locations as these schools, school leaders search globally for new teachers to fill openings. Most well-funded international schools employ the services of one or more specialized recruitment agencies to assist in their efforts to attract and vet candidates (Cox, 2012). The two largest of these are Search Associates and International School Services. These companies act as intermediaries between the schools and prospective employees. They collect prospective teachers' information into a dossier and make these files available as a searchable database to the schools. Many of these companies go so far as to confirm the validity of candidates' information, elicit and store confidential references from past employers,

and in some cases act as matchmakers between the schools and teachers. School leaders can then identify desired candidates from these databases and make contact directly either by phone or by video conferencing. In addition, many school leaders interview candidates face to face during the many job fairs that these recruitment companies host around the world each year (Search Associates, 2015).

During the recruiting season, in cities such as Bangkok, London, Dubai, and Boston, teachers and international school representatives meet at these job fairs. Interviews are held, jobs are offered, and contracts are signed. It is not unusual for a highly qualified candidate to interview with ten or more different schools in a single day at a job fair. Likewise, school representatives frequently meet with dozens of candidates during these compressed timeframes as they search for the ideal candidates for the jobs that they have to fill. Depending on their needs, schools may attend several job fairs over the course of a single school year. Teaching candidates most often only attend a single fair, but if they have not signed a contract after that fair they may choose to participate in a second (Cox, 2012).

The timing of events at these job fairs is important for the logistics of this study. After interviews, it is expected by the event organisers that schools allow teacher 24 hours to consider any contract offer that has been made. This time period is set to allow teacher candidates to have a suitable amount of time to evaluate the offer while also ensuring that if they choose not to take the position the offering school can look to other applying teachers as quickly as possible. While many schools try to avoid offering the full 24-hour window, it is normal for teachers to take the night to consider any offer.

A factor for both teachers and school leaders that limits participation in job fairs is the cost of participating. Travel, accommodation and registration expenses serve as a deterrent for many candidates and employers. It is not unusual for a candidate to spend \$2000 to attend a single job fair with recruiting schools often spending far more. Additionally, time away from work and family responsibilities also impacts decisions to attend job fairs. Heads of large schools, or institutions with many vacancies can often spend more than three weeks during the recruitment season travelling to these job fairs to find the teachers needed for the upcoming school year (Cox, 2012).

In addition to using recruitment agencies, international schools may also attract and hire candidates through other means. Most schools use their web pages as a venue to inform potential candidates about working conditions in that community and list openings. Additionally, many schools advertise in publications such as the *Times Educational Supplement* and *The International Educator* (a quarterly newspaper distributed widely among international schools.) After gaining interest through these avenues, schools may choose to interview candidates by telephone, or by videoconferencing. Candidates with a narrow geographical scope to their job-search may even choose to travel to that location to visit the schools and conduct interviews in person.

Over the past few years, school leaders have increasingly been trying to account for the increasing competition for top candidates by trying to offer these candidates jobs earlier and earlier in the recruiting cycle. It is thought that by giving teachers a solid offer before the first job fairs take place that they will have a higher likelihood of accepting as they would not yet

have other offers to consider and it would allow the teacher to forgo the costs, stress, and time of attending a job fair.

This effort raises several new concerns for school leaders. Most important of these issues is identifying which positions will be open at their school earlier than traditionally takes place. While most teacher contracts have a renewal date during the month of December, schools wishing to hire before the typical recruitment season would like to have confirmations of which teachers will be leaving the school by October. To accomplish this several international schools have offered cash bonuses for staff to make binding commitments in October or September to stay with the school or depart at the end of the school year.

While the largest schools may have well developed human resource departments, smaller schools most often rely on school directors, principals, or other education professionals to conduct most recruitment activities. These school leaders often have little or no training in hiring staff to find the teachers needed for the school. It may be understandable then that international schools' hiring practices are typically not deeply informed by research but instead shaped by past practice and the personal judgement of school directors (Odland, 2007).

The diversity of international school governance, hiring, teaching and recruitment contexts presents a clear need for international school leaders to better understand teacher thinking during the recruiting and hiring process. This study answers that challenge.

Personal Background

I have spent the last thirteen years of my professional life teaching internationally. From Shanghai to Senegal, I have experienced many of the extremes of the international school

world. During that time I have undertaken five separate job searches for my own career. This past fall, after conducting the research for this study, I have assumed a role as a school leader. Over the past ten months, I have started to struggle through the challenge of hiring teachers for my current school.

In my own experience as a teacher deciding to accept or reject offers, I can see moments of clear-eyed reason, and others moments filled with impulse and emotion. Some of my judgements about school offers were incredibly accurate and others wildly incorrect. The challenge that I faced to really know the value of the positions is an incredibly difficult one.

Likewise, as a new leader seeking to hire the best candidate for my school, I have seen how difficult it is to convince teachers to accept my offer over the others that they have or may yet receive. I see the limited resources that school leaders have to sway candidates toward accepting a job and the even more limited understanding of how these tools might help or hinder their recruitment effort.

Statement of Problem

Despite the recognized value of effectively recruiting teaching staff, international school leaders struggle to attract the educators that they seek due to increasing competition from other school organizations and a lack of research to inform their recruitment efforts (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Mancuso, 2010). International school leaders are currently unable to consistently hire top teachers as these candidates are often asked to choose between several jobs, and school leaders lack a clear understanding of how teachers make choices between positions.

This difficulty results in many school organizations either settling for poorly trained and inexperienced teachers or diverting large amounts of resources to the efforts of attracting high-quality educators (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2011). School leaders compete with each other for candidates, often recruiting and hiring simultaneously at job fairs, for example. Competition in teacher recruitment like this often results in highly capable teachers facing the situation of choosing between several competing offers from different schools. The decisions made by these teachers impact the schools from which the offers are made. While international school leaders have high degrees of autonomy in their hiring practices, it is unclear what impact any changes may have on the likelihood of hiring desired teachers due to the lack of established research or theory on this topic. Organizations that are able to regularly bring in the most talented teachers will outperform those that are unable to do so. The ability of school leaders to hire effective teachers is an important part in maintaining or improving student outcomes. Research is needed to help school leaders hire effectively in the face of competition. This research addresses this problem directly for international school system leaders.

The Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to develop evidence-based guidelines for teacher recruitment to positions with international schools. These guidelines are based on the decision making process utilized by teachers seeking positions with international schools. Specifically, how do they decide to accept or reject a job offer made to them? With a better understanding of teacher decision making processes and specific recruiting strategies based on these patterns

school leaders will be more successful in their recruitment efforts and thus improve their school. These research-based understandings are to be developed through the use of qualitative verbal protocol analysis (VPA) approach. VPA research, like other methods focused on developing deep understanding of a phenomenon, typically starts with few broad outlining questions to guide the research. Data gathered through the attention to these broad questions allows a clear picture of the issue under examination to emerge from this evidence (Creswell, 2009).

In order to develop guidelines for school leaders, I will investigate the following questions:

Question #1: What factors do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Question #2: What processes do teachers use when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Definition of Key Terminology Used in This Study

- *International School* – Institutions engaged in K-12 education using a national (non-host country) or international curriculum for a student body that is primarily made up of expatriates (Odland, 2007).
- *School Leader* – Any school representative that is involved in the hiring and recruitment process of teachers.

- *Market* – The geographic or social space where teachers and employers come together to negotiate the exchange of employment for reward. Not all qualified teachers or all teaching jobs are in the same markets. It is only when teachers looking for employment and school leaders seeking to hire interact with one another that they enter into a market together. (Chevalier & Dolton, 2004).
- *Demand* – The number of teaching positions at a given level of compensation within the market. As the numbers of students seeking education grow within any market, the demand for teachers will also rise (Boardman, Darling-Hammond, & Mullin, 1982). In some cases, teacher demand is modified through adjustments in class sizes or changes in student-contact time for teachers, but generally there is a nearly directly correlated relationship between student populations and teacher demand (Guarino et al., 2006).
- *Supply* – The number of qualified individuals willing to accept a position at the offered level of compensation (Guarino et al., 2006).
- *Compensation* – The expected total benefits that an employee can expect from any position. It is not restricted to salary, but instead it is the aggregate of any rewards gained from that position. This may include salary, bonuses, career advancement, relative enjoyment of the job, and personal satisfaction in the role (Guarino et al., 2006).
- *Financial Compensation* – The total financial benefits that a teacher can expect to receive by accepting a position. This includes salary, expected stipends, retirement funds, and expected travel and moving allowances.
- *Wanderlust* – “A great desire to travel or roam about” (Hanks, McLeod, & Urdang, 1986, p. 1708 as cited in Cox, 2012).

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the context for this study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study the guiding research questions and definitions of key terminology used in this document. Chapter Two examines the relevant literature that will guide and inform this study. This examination begins with the conceptual framework used and an introduction to the labour market perspective (Baker-Doyle, 2010), behavioural economics (Kahneman, 2011; Thaler, 2015), and the applicant attraction model (Rynes & Barber, 1990). This review continues to examine the available research on international teacher recruitment and decision making. Chapter Three presents the methodology used in this study. This includes a description of verbal protocol analysis, the analysis process proposed by Chi (1997), the participant selection process, and an examination of trustworthiness and ethical considerations raised by this research. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study as well as a discussion of practical and theoretical implications of this research and provides three guidelines for evidence-based improvements in current practice.

Chapter Summary

The current chapter examines the importance of effective teacher recruitment for maintaining excellent teaching and learning in international schools. Teacher quality is the most significant school-based factor impacting student attainment. Overall teacher quality within a school can be improved through effective recruitment. The problem that exists for international

school leaders at the present time is a lack of effective teacher recruitment. International schools face increasing competition for teachers and this has resulted in numerous organizations settling for teachers with less training or experience than desired by school leaders. Improvements to recruitment practices or targeted improvement of compensation offered to teachers may allow schools to be more effective at hiring highly effective teachers, but school leaders lack a research-based framework to guide this important leadership function. Based on this need, this chapter introduces this research which will be used to develop guidelines for international school leaders recruiting teachers. The chapter culminates with the two research questions that will guide this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

A detailed review of existing research informs this study. This section will begin by presenting the conceptual framework that guides this research and by examining the components underpinning the need for a better understanding of how international teachers choose to accept or reject job offers. Following this discussion, past research and theoretical frameworks that may be informative in the interpretation of the data gathered in this study will be examined.

Conceptual Framework

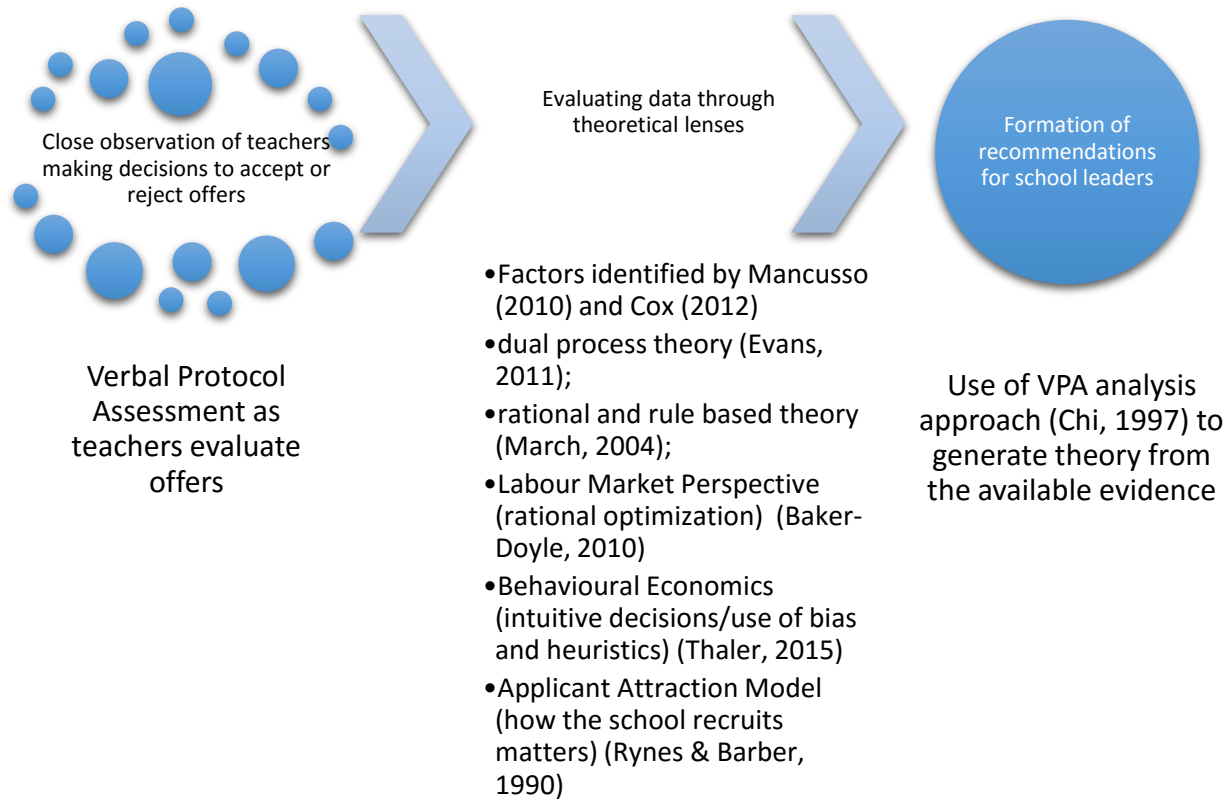


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This study develops guidelines to assist international school leaders as they recruit teachers. These guidelines are shaped by examining the ways that teachers evaluate job offers from international schools and what factors may make teachers more or less likely to accept such offers. The study uses verbal protocol analysis interview techniques to gather evidence on the thinking processes of teachers considering job offers. This data gathering took place as

these teachers decided to accept or reject job offers at two international school job fairs during spring 2014.

A verbal protocol analysis approach (Chi, 1997; Ericsson & Simon, 1993b) is used to interpret these data describing the factors or issues that teachers attended to and the strategies and processes that these teachers used to evaluate the job offers. This approach to data analysis calls for the researcher to compare the data against established formalisms but also to organically develop new understandings based on how well the gathered data fits conceptual categories. It is therefore important for this research to begin with a brief examination of key conceptual theories that inform recruitment in the international school market. While a more detailed examination of research follows later in this chapter, it is helpful to begin by briefly examining three theories or bodies of research that shape and guide the study presented here: a) the labour market perspective, b) a behavioural economic perspective, and c) the applicant attraction model.

Labour Market Perspective

The majority of existing research that examines teacher recruitment and related issues adopts a labour market perspective (Baker-Doyle, 2010). This theory is taken from the field of microeconomics and its application is common in research that discusses labour issues across many contexts.

The implication of using labour market perspective to examine how teachers and school leaders select one another during the recruitment processes is that this model assumes that labour markets for teachers are elastic (Baker-Doyle, 2010). This elasticity implies that if demand rises for a certain quality of teachers and if demand outpaces the supply of those

teachers, then the total compensation for these teacher positions must also rise in order to entice more teachers into the market and to bring these forces back into balance. School leaders that struggle to find acceptable candidates for open positions—evidence of a lack of teacher supply in the market—can entice more teachers to consider their school by increasing compensation. This may be done by leaders working towards improving working conditions, raising salary, or through other measures (Baker-Doyle, 2010; Boardman et al., 1982).

Fundamentally, this theory suggests that individual teachers will always seek the position that gives them the best overall reward (Baker-Doyle, 2010; Chevalier & Dolton, 2004). In economics literature this is referred to as *optimization*. Since school leaders of individual international schools have minimal control over the overall demand for and supply teachers for this market, they must use adjustments to their overall compensation offered to teachers in order to ensure effective recruitment.

Labour market perspective is an important tool for conceptualizing the nature of teacher recruitment and adjustments that school system leaders can make to more effectively hire top teachers (Loeb & Béteille, 2008). Despite this utility, the ability of this perspective to help school leaders maximize their effectiveness in recruiting teachers is challenged here. This theory, like other economic frameworks, describes human behaviour in rough strokes, but it fails to predict all decisions by teachers considering job offers. For example, teachers are frequently hesitant to move to accept higher paying positions despite the prediction that the increased salary would prompt such a move (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). It is thought that additional theoretical components are necessary to better understand this phenomenon.

Behavioural Economics

The study of behavioural economics provides evidence of deviation to behaviour patterns predicted by the labour market perspective or similar microeconomic theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Thaler, 2015). Behavioural economics also suggests that by understanding where and when people make actions not predicted by the economic theory, an advantage is provided to people who would desire to change or modify their behaviour (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). It is for these reasons that incorporating understandings utilizing the principles of behavioural economics is a useful tool for school leaders when they face the important task of hiring teachers. In application here, it is assumed that if a school leader could better understand what ways teachers deviate from purely optimizing behaviours then school leaders could use this understanding to more effectively recruit teachers to their school. If teachers show a preference to accept otherwise less attractive positions if the interview process made them feel good, then it would be valuable for school leaders to not only understand this information but also to change their interview processes accordingly.

Key researchers leading this move away from classic economic theory for predicting human behaviour are Kahneman (2011), Tversky (1972), and Thaler (2015). The core premise of economic theory that this trio challenge is the idea that consumers consistently or effectively optimize. This challenges the labour market perspective and the related assumption that teachers will take the position that would grant them the greatest overall reward. Kahneman and Tversky are among the researchers that have conducted hundreds of laboratory based studies that demonstrate numerous ways that people do not optimize (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky, 1972). Among other reasons, people make less than optimal choices to avoid

risk, to simplify their decisions, and because they could not accurately determine the optimal choice easily (Kahneman, 2011). Thaler notes that “the optimization problems that ordinary people confront are often too hard for them to solve, or even come close to solving” (2015, p. 27). The assumption that a teacher can evaluate the benefits afforded by one school and effectively compare those to another school located half the world away is challenged in this research. As the Findings/Evidence chapter will show, teachers are hesitant to commit to jobs on the basis of difficult to assess factors.

Behavioural economics researchers understand human behaviour that deviates from economic theory’s predictions as a phenomenon attributable to human biases. The capability to identify how and when these biases take place is at the very core of behavioural economics (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Individuals have been found to take otherwise less valuable offers from people because they like them, because of the way that the offer was presented, or even simply because they were in a good mood (Kahneman, 2011; Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2007). If school leaders are able to better understand how and why these non-optimizing behaviours occur in teachers’ decision making around job offers, they have an opportunity to improve recruitment efforts.

Applicant Attraction Model

While not evoking behavioural economic terms, it is clear that some of the ideas suggested by behavioural economists are evident in Rynes and Barber’s applicant attraction model (1990). These authors identify that organizations facing vacancies due to persistent labour shortages require applicant attraction strategies that are fundamentally different than typical recruitment efforts guided purely by a labour market perspective. The model that they

propose has three distinct components: a) altering recruitment practices, b) targeting non-traditional applicants, and c) modifying employment inducements (Rynes & Barber, 1990).

Modification of employment inducements is certainly related to compensation as described from a labour market perspective, but Rynes and Barber identify that some elements of compensation may be strategically altered to have an outsized effect on increasing applicants' interest in the position. Specifically they note that salary may be more easily understood, and therefore more attractive, than alterations in less transparent job attributes (1990, p. 294).

Additionally, this research identifies the importance of how an organization recruits. This model suggests the importance of the effective organization representatives and realistic organizational messages as well as the detrimental effect that delays in the recruitment process may have on hiring success.

The issue under examination here begins from the view that high levels of competition for teachers have a detrimental effect on school leaders' ability to hire effective teachers (Cox, 2012; Mancuso, 2010). Furthermore, if school leaders gain a theoretical understanding of how teachers decide between competing job offers, these leaders would be better equipped to hire teachers and thus improve their schools. This identified problem and proposed solution raises four key areas that would benefit from examination through research.

1. The competition for teachers within the international schools context.
2. The impact that this competition has on schools.

3. The existing theoretical framework of how international school leaders can most effectively recruit teachers.
4. A review of existing research on teacher recruitment and decision making theory to be used in the interpretation of data gathered in this research and in the construction of the guidelines presented here.

High Levels of Competition for Teachers

This research answers and addresses the leadership problem of effective teaching staff recruitment by international school leaders. This problem has been blamed for high levels of competition between school leaders in their efforts to hire desirable candidates (Mancuso, 2010). It is therefore important that we begin by examining the nature of this competition and assess if it is in fact a hurdle to effective school staffing. The genesis of this study came in response to international school leaders repeatedly telling this researcher that they struggled to hire the teachers that they targeted in their recruitment efforts because of the competition from other schools. These reports identify a clear problem, yet because they are anecdotal in nature it is important to confirm this widely held belief prior to going further with this research. This section will examine the literature and research, in the end identifying that there exists a high level of competition for teachers between international schools and a dire need for more research-based underpinnings for leaders who recruit teachers in international schools. Understanding the nature of this competition and the effects that it has on the overall international teacher labour market is crucial in the development of responses to this problem facing school leaders.

Demand

In order to show that competition has increased among school leaders looking to hire suitably qualified teachers for international schools it is necessary for the demand to have grown faster than the supply of teachers within this market. Economic theory has told us that if the demand for qualified teachers grows faster than teacher supply, school leaders are dealing with a competitive teacher labour market (Chevalier & Dolton, 2004; Loeb & Béteille, 2008).

For leaders, defining the size or rate of change in the labour market for international schools is challenging. There are diverse staffing practices among schools and limited research on describing these practices. Researchers can however draw on the research examining the numbers of international schools overall to see that the overall demand for teachers is rising quickly. The most prolific research group tracking the overall international school market, International Schools Consultancy (ISC), reports that there are currently 7,545 international schools educating almost 4 million students (2015). This is up from 6000 schools just three years earlier (Keeling, 2012). ISC forecasts an increase to 11000 schools by the year 2023 (Keeling, 2013). The methods used by ISC to stay abreast of this market are direct communication with school organizations, collaboration with accrediting bodies, and through school site visits. This firm has several full-time researchers and has been actively maintaining a database of international schools for more than 30 years (ISC Research Ltd., 2015). Their research is limited to tracking numbers of schools as well as enrolment of students at these schools. Exact numbers of teachers is not directly gathered by ISC but instead extrapolated from the other data points. As it is assumed in ISC reporting that international schools have not

fundamentally changed their average number of teachers or teacher to student ratios in the recent past, so it is likely that demand for teachers will grow at a commensurate rate to this predicted growth in overall numbers of schools.

Other researchers corroborate the finding of a rapid rate of growth in the size of the international education market over the past decade (Brummit, 2009; Cox, 2012)

Because there is such a paucity of research in the international school market specifically, it is also informative to examine other markets both globally and from the regions where international teachers are often drawn from as market spill over effects may result in issues in these markets having impacts on the international teacher market.

UNESCO reports suggest that across the world, there is a growing and as of yet unmet demand for more and higher quality education. In 2012 there were 29 million primary school teachers worldwide, but also an unmet need for almost 4 million additional teachers simply to meet the goal of providing primary education for all (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). This need, and the associated burden of unschooled children or unsuitable class sizes, are not spread evenly. Sub-Saharan African nations disproportionately bear this burden with only two thirds of their educational staffing needs being met (Motivans, Smith, & Bruneforth, 2006).

Global demand is forecast to grow over the next generation. To meet the needs for global primary education in the year 2030, an additional 9 million new teachers are needed in addition to 23 million teacher hires to account for attrition of those currently employed in the field (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).

Within key domestic markets, there is also ample evidence to suggest that the phenomenon of increasing demand for teachers is widespread. The research includes reports of

increasing demand for teachers in northern Canada (Kitchenham & Chateauneuf, 2010), within the US generally (Ingersoll, 2001), and within the UK (Chevalier & Dolton, 2004).

Supply

Quantifying Supply

The issue of teacher supply to teaching labour markets is a difficult one to quantify. In typical markets for goods or services if there is more demand than supply then prospective buyers have three available options: (1) They can go without the good or service, (2) accept a substitute good or service, or (3) pay more for the same good or service. In education there are limitations that do not make all of these options equally viable. The societal expectation of having a teacher for every classroom reduces the ability of schools or school districts to simply not fill a position when increasing demand creates a shortfall of skilled labour in the market. Also, the system response to pay more salary when there is a labour shortfall is may not be available in any given teacher market because most school leaders have little or no ability to raise salaries in order to hire in an undersupplied market. Instead, in the short-term the vast majority of positions are filled at the same rate even if it means that school leaders must hire an unqualified applicant (Chevalier & Dolton, 2004). This practice obscures shortfalls in teacher supply. As a response, teacher attrition rates have been used to suggest “supply” in the research (Ingersoll & Ingersoll, 2003). Rates of teacher attrition can be compared to an existing teacher expected inflow (newly trained teachers) to predict overall supply (Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001). This calculus is imperfect because teachers graduating from professional preparation programs can move to other markets while teachers leaving their

schools may stay within the profession in the same market but with a different school. Despite these limitations and imperfections, this supply calculation methodology remains one of the preferred ways researchers use to evaluate the general teacher supply to the teaching market (Beresh et al., 2003; Ingersoll, 2001).

Within international schools there have been only a few studies examining the rates that teachers leave their school. The most robust and recent of these is the work of Mancuso (2010). This study found that among schools within the Near East South Asian (NESA) region, 17% of teachers left their schools each year (Mancuso, 2010, p. 79). This finding was gathered from surveys completed by heads of NESA member schools. The select nature of NESA schools and the further limiting 55% response rate from the approached school heads raises some reliability questions for this finding (p. 51). NESA membership costs each school several thousand dollars each year and the vast majority of schools in this region with limited budgets are not NESA members. It is possible that NESA membership can be correlated with improved overall compensation at a school due to the lurking factor of greater financial resources for the school. It is also possible that heads of NESA member schools that have less success retaining their teachers may be less likely to participate in a survey pertaining to retention rates. It is possible that that the actual rate of teachers leaving international schools each year is higher than this figure reported in Mancuso's research.

In addition to Mancuso's work, there are other qualitative assessments of the teacher supply situation that can be used to examine the numbers of highly qualified teachers available to international schools. Cox's examination of teacher recruitment among international schools for example used a review of the limited research available combined with interviews with

many school directors to describe the supply issue. Using this method, Cox (2012) found evidence that the pool of prospective teachers considering international schools had not keeping pace with demand within this market. In Canterford's (2009) description of the international school labour market, he also details the increasing scarcity of teachers as noted from interviews with school heads. In addition to the interview method, Canterford's findings are formed through examining the *ISS Directory of Overseas Schools* (Canterford, 2009). His analysis describes the source of a supply of international teachers. Canterford found that international schools draw their teaching staff primarily from the US and UK with just over half of all teachers hailing from those nations (2003). This finding is similar to the breakdown of nationalities for participants in Cox's study as well (2012). Teachers from Canadian, Australian, and other native English speaking countries are also hired into international schools frequently. These patterns were found due to preferences of school leaders to hire candidates that have high levels of familiarity and expertise with cultural, linguistic and pedagogical norms of the hiring schools (Canterford, 2003). Due to the preferences for school leaders to hire from these locations, organizations promoting the advancement of international education have organized efforts within these areas to raise awareness of international education among the larger teacher populations in an effort to increase the supply to the international market (Cox, 2012). This trend of drawing teachers into international schools from Canada and the United States makes an examination of their teacher supply markets also valuable here. Issues facing these supplying teacher labour markets will have impact in the number and quality of teachers opting to pursue careers in international education.

Issues Impacting Supply

There has been much research identifying the inadequate supply of teachers to many markets within the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll & Ingersoll, 2003; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). Much of the discussion within the research has examined both causes and possible solutions to this issue. This body of research has been dominated by two ideas over the past 30 years. The first is the perceived 'greying' of the teacher workforce, and the second is the reluctance of new teachers to persist in the profession. The greying theory has led many to predict calamitous shortfalls in the supply of teachers in the near future due to a huge wave of retiring baby boomers (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Grambs & Seefeldt, 1977). This research was shaped by demographic reports that have showed the average age of teachers steadily rising within the US during the 1980s and 1990s and increased retirements from the profession more recently (G. Borman & Dowling, 2008; Texas Center For Educational Research, 2000).

Since the turn of the century however, evidence has mounted that retiring teachers were not the sole or even the primary cause for teacher supply shortages. Starting with Ingersoll's ground-breaking examination into rates and reasons for teacher turnover (2001), researchers have used detailed census and survey data to reveal that end of career retirements account for less than a third of departing American teachers (G. Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll further demonstrated that almost half of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching making a huge impact on overall teacher supply (2003). It is not only retiring teachers that are the main cause of teacher shortages, but also the failure for teachers to persist in the

profession. Shortages can no longer be viewed as an inevitable result of demographics, but instead as a symptom of a much more complicated and poorly understood problem within the teaching profession (Guarino et al., 2006).

American governments and school districts have undertaken many efforts to increase supply over the past twenty years as a direct result of this insufficient supply. Many states have reduced the requirements to gain teacher certification while school districts have lowering the standards required for individual positions (Baker-Doyle, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Increasingly, teachers have entered jobs without specialized training in the subject or student group they were teaching. In other instances, uncertified or under-certified teachers were recruited into American classrooms to fill jobs that would otherwise be left vacant (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). States have introduced alternative certification programs and other measures to allow more people to be deemed qualified to enter the teaching workforce. 'Fast Train', 'Troops to Teachers' and 'Teach for America' are examples of such programs that bring inexperienced and otherwise uncertified teachers into the classroom to meet the public need. While the merits and overall effectiveness of these programs are debated, they illustrate a reduction in the expected standards for teachers and the desperation that some areas of the country face in attracting more experienced and better trained teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; 2010). These and other systemic responses are examples of the push to address the supply side of the recruitment and retention puzzle.

Within the Canadian context, researchers and decision makers have shown a greater understanding that poor retention of new teachers in the field is a large contributing factor to teacher shortages (Beresh et al., 2003; Kitchenham & Chateaufneuf, 2010). Similar to the

American findings, a disproportionate number of Canadians leave the field of teaching after their fourth or fifth year in the profession (Clandinin et al., 2012). While most areas of Canada have not experienced teacher shortages like those seen in the US, this is a significant lack of uniformity in the availability of teachers across the country (Beresh et al., 2003; Government of Alberta, 2010). This uneven distribution of teachers has created regional shortages, with northern and rural schools experiencing great difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers even at times when urban centers have an excess of qualified teachers (Kitchenham & Chateaufneuf, 2010). This uneven demand also manifests according to teachable area. Specialist teachers, including those teaching Aboriginal languages, French immersion, information technology, mathematics, high school sciences and special education have been identified as more difficult to hire than other openings (Beresh et al., 2003). The effect of these shortfalls has been that many rural and northern schools in Canada have also been forced to employ under-qualified teachers, or to have professionals teaching subject areas that they are untrained for (Kitchenham & Chateaufneuf, 2010).

Impact of Competition

The impact of the high level of competition for teachers has been well documented in the literature. These effects are varied across international school contexts. This review finds that the most commonly documented effect of teacher labour market competition has resulted in schools responding to this competition by investing more time and money in order to expand current recruitment practices (Mancuso, 2010, p. 24). Other school leaders have responded by hiring teachers who have less training, experience or other desirable traits. In short, the

literature on teacher competition reviewed here shows that competition has the effect on leaders of reducing teaching standards while spending more resources to get teachers. These are important considerations in a study of teacher decision making to accept offers, with implications for leaders seeking to attract them.

Expansions of recruitment efforts have been documented in the literature among both international and domestic schools. These expansions come with additional costs. For example, the state of Texas, with a slightly below the American average turnover rate, estimates direct hiring costs for replacement teachers at \$329 million USD each year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). International schools typically suffer a proportionally greater burden associated with teacher recruitment due to the higher costs associated with conducting teacher recruitment overseas (Cox, 2012; Mancuso, 2010; Stirzaker, 2004). International recruiting fairs require costs for travel as well as placement fees for each teacher hired. The recruitment costs for single schools can exceed \$100,000 each year.

In addition to this financial cost there is also the administrative burden placed on school leaders in recruiting. The continuous effort of replacing departing teachers represents a huge amount of time and attention that might be better used to improve current teachers or otherwise add value to schools (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Texas Center For Educational Research, 2000). The time required to recruit teachers for international schools is also greater than for a similarly sized domestic school. It is not uncommon for international school leaders to be away from their school for several weeks during the recruiting season to attend recruitment fairs (Canterford, 2009).

Competition for teachers has also been found as a force causing many schools systems to adjust the level of qualifications or otherwise hire a less desirable candidate. There is research describing this occurring as a response to teacher shortages in American inner-cities (Adamson & Darling-hammond, 2012), northern Canada (Kitchenham & Chateauneuf, 2010), and in international schools (Odland, 2007).

In summary, competition presents a challenge for school leaders. It reduces their ability to hire teachers effectively and efficiently. This competition and the resulting recruiting problems that are associated with it beg for theoretical frameworks to assist in hiring practices to mitigate these effects.

Existing Recruiting Theory

A better understanding of recruitment decision making processes by job-seekers may help school leaders to mitigate the effects of competition and ensure that they have the best chance of hiring the teachers that they want for their school. Despite this need there has been limited research into this issue. The majority of work that has examined staffing within the international school context has done so by analyzing staff composition (Canterford, 2003, 2009) and retention (Mancuso et al., 2011; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009) rather than focusing specifically on recruitment issues, as this study does. Thorough searches by this researcher uncovered only two significant pieces of research that examine factors of attraction that that may contribute to a teacher accepting a position with a school.

Chandler's work uses surveys of 26 current international school teachers to examine the impact that location plays in teachers' decisions to apply to a school or remain in their current

position. His findings reveal that teachers were less likely to consider jobs in some locations than others (Chandler, 2011). Teachers in this study showed a strong preference to work in Western Europe while having little interest to apply for jobs in the Middle East. The implications of this finding are limited as schools have no ability to alter their location and it is likely that school leaders had a good understanding of this preference held by teachers prior to this research.

More important in this field of inquiry is the research by Cox (2012). This work also uses survey data and qualitative analysis to evaluate teacher preferences. Cox however uses a detailed battery of questions to examine a wide range of factors of attraction that shape teachers' likelihood to apply for a position. Other components that strengthen this research are Cox's use of a large participant group (n=790) that were all registered candidates with the leading recruiting agencies. This research tested the impact of seven factors of attraction on teachers' decisions to apply for positions. These factors and general methodology were adopted from the work of Mancuso (2010) who in turn drew the framework from Ingersoll (2001). The finding of this study suggest that international teachers responded to the following seven factors of attraction, ranking #1 as the most important:

- 1) relationship with school leadership,
- 2) external work conditions,
- 3) professional satisfaction,
- 4) personal well-being,
- 5) professional growth,
- 6) compensation and career advancement, and

7) wanderlust (2012, p, 36).

To gain a more complete picture of factors of attraction that are identified in this and other research as important to international school teachers, this body of research has been synthesized here. This summary includes those studies that examine retention as the elements that shape that behaviour are likely to be informative for investigating recruitment as well.

Foremost in these studies, the role of leadership is found as an important factor in attracting or repelling teachers. Many educators show a strong preference for working with school leaders that are viewed as supportive and collaborative in their management of teachers (Cox, 2012; Mancuso et al., 2011; Odland, 2007). Additionally, the teacher's expected quality of life including social opportunities and the location of the school have also been shown to impact the desirability of a teaching position. Teachers have expressed preferences to work in environments where they have compelling travel opportunities and also those that provide supportive school and local area culture (Chandler, 2011; Joslin, 2002). Many teachers are drawn to opportunities to teach in some geographical destination more so than in others, though the impact of this effect appears to diminish as teachers progress in their careers (Chandler, 2011). Other elements of location that seem particularly important to teachers when deciding to accept a position include the safety and stability of a region, and the openness of the community to expatriates (Chandler, 2011). Teachers also report themselves as more likely to join schools if they feel that they will have greater professional opportunities and overall compensation packages within those organizations (Cox, 2012; Mancuso, 2010). Especially in the middle of their careers, international teachers show a strong preference for schools that

allow them to teach desired subject areas or curricula, assume new responsibilities, or otherwise further their careers (Cox, 2012; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009).

These investigations into recruitment and retention behaviours of teachers have primarily examined data generated through survey and quantitative analysis methods (Chandler, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Roberts et al., 2010). Specifically in this context, research focussed on international teachers has relied on stated preferences to reveal what teachers are looking for in a school or why they choose to leave their current job (Cox, 2012; Mancuso, 2010; Odland, 2007). While the patterns revealed in these studies are informative, this methodology is prone to biases issues including response bias, social acceptability bias, volunteer bias and non-respondent bias (Olson, 2006) that may distance this data from actual recruitment decisions. The social acceptability of some responses makes it likely that factors of attraction that are connected with good professional practice, such as collaborative atmosphere or leadership opportunities, may be over reported when compared to less socially admired job attributes such as travel opportunities from that location or salary. A teacher responding to these surveys may state that professional autonomy is the most important factor in choosing a new school, but then accept a job offer for more money at a school with low levels of teacher autonomy. This effect may be exaggerated in the three studies reported here because all of these researchers are administrators in the small world of international schools. As such, they could be viewed as potential future employers by respondents. Despite efforts to keep respondent identities hidden, when job seekers are asked by people who could hire them about what makes a school attractive, they may hesitate before listing pay or location first. These studies are also prone to volunteer and non-respondent bias. In all of these studies the sample

group of teachers examined is drawn from those that have volunteered to participate. It is entirely possible that those teachers that chose to enter this study are not indicative of international teachers as a whole. Lurking variables such as a high levels of altruism may explain why this group of teachers was more likely to volunteer for this study and also impact what factors they look for in a school.

These existing studies are also conducted weeks and months apart from actual decision making. This distance of timing may also impact the accuracy of these studies at predicting teachers' actual behaviour when deciding on job offers. Additionally, these studies proceed from the assumption that job seekers will choose the optimal position based on factors of attraction. This assumption implies candidates' can gain complete and accurate information about prospective jobs through their job search. Both of these assumptions are questioned in this study. If teachers are to use a rational evaluative method for selecting a school, that is to say one that gathers information about the factors that are desirable and then using this information to make an optimal decision, teachers must first have methods to effectively gather and understand these factors. Despite this assumption, most factors of attraction identified as desired by teachers as they seek employment such as those presented by Cox are difficult to assess using reasonable job search techniques. How accurately could a teacher understand what their future relationship with the school leadership might be after just one or two interviews? Likewise, are teachers able to compare the external work conditions of two job offers in communities that a teacher has never visited? As discussed earlier, behavioural economic researchers outside of the field of education have provided evidence that decision makers do not always, or perhaps even often, make choices to optimize their results (Thaler,

2015). How teachers act in the face of this incomplete knowledge is unknown at this time, but it is likely that they are not able to make a completely informed and rational evaluation of the factors, and therefore other mechanisms or decision factors are likely to be at play. This question drives the need for a more clear understanding of how decisions are made. As Cox concludes his study he notes, "This study begins to define a map of recruitment in which very little research gave guidance before and points a route to both additional research and improved practice" (2012, p. 70).

Existing research has not adequately described how teachers make decisions when seeking international positions. By developing a more robust understanding of the processes used allows this study to make recommendations for school leaders to more effectively hire the candidate teachers.

Decision Making

This study develops recommendation to inform the recruiting actions of school leaders. These are based not just on factors of attraction that influence teachers' decisions, but also explaining how these factors are assessed and ultimately how these teachers make decisions to accept or reject job offers. For this reason, it is important to examine the relevant research on decision making both in general and as it relates more specifically to career decisions in order to develop a theoretical framework for job decision making by teachers. This framework incorporates dual process theory (Evans, 2011); rational and rule based theory (March, 2004); elimination by aspect and satisficing (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000); and game theory and matching markets theory (Ramsey, 2008).

Decision making has long been studied by political scientists, marketers, economists, psychologists, and others. As a result of this widespread and ongoing interest, there have been numerous theories and frameworks put forth aiming to explain and predict choice. What follows here is a brief examination and critique of this literature.

Early decision making theories, such as those offered by John von Neumann and Leonard Savage, proposed a rational actor model (Gintis, 2009). This group of theories suggest that decision makers work to maximize their individual net gain as a result of any decision: that they would act rationally. They are predicting what outcomes might come from their decisions and choosing the option with the most desirable end result. Since many of these outcomes are uncertain, rational choice makers formulate what they expect to happen and act based on this expected utility. This model of decision making can be described as rational and analytical. However, as decision making research expanded 1970s and 1980s, growing numbers of researchers began to identify ways that decision makers frequently deviated from the these expected decision making strategies (eg., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Sattath, 1979). Increasingly, both experimental and field based evidence showed decision makers frequently made rapid decisions that did not systematically examine and compare all options, nor did the decision makers always seek to maximize their own benefit. Instead, decision makers at times make snap judgements or rely on their best guess while at other times they make decisions that are better described as fulfilling a role expected of them rather than striving for their maximum personal gains. From these observations, numerous decision making frameworks and theories have been constructed to better understand human behaviour. As it would be impractical to examine more than a handful of individual theories in this space, these models will instead be

grouped into the intuitive and the analytical. From this division, the analytical is then also subdivided into rational-based and rule-based decision making.

Intuitive versus Analytical

Research examining decision making has produced mounting evidence supporting the presence of two distinct methods of making decisions. Seeking to account for snap judgements, those choices that are made without time for deliberative thought, that are so common in field examinations of decision making (as found in Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000), theorists posited the existence of two separate decision making processes. One system clearly allowed decision makers to use intuitive or instinctive judgements while the other relied on more analytical processes (Stanovich, 2012).

From tentative beginnings (the first research paper suggesting such a model was titled “Dual processes in reasoning?” (Wason & Evans, 1975)), dual process theories have become common place in research on learning, cognition, and decision making (Evans, 2011; Kahneman, 2011).

This body of research suggests two distinct processes for making judgements. While there is some variation in the names for these processes in the literature, I will use the terms coined by Stanovich (1999) as these have become common in the literature: (1) system 1, the rapid, unconscious, and instinctive process, and (2) system 2, the analytical process that is most often slower and more deliberate. The fundamental differences between these two systems lie in the cognitive mechanisms used in their application.

In order to use a system 2 process to make a decision, working memory and cognitive attention are both required. Faced with a decision, an individual using system 2 gathers all available information, compares it to remembered experiences, assesses what might happen as a result of each possible choice and makes a choice (Kahneman, 2011). Such a process is relatively slow and requires a high level of cognitive effort. It is only possible to attend to one system 2 task at a single time. Due to the large number of decisions required in daily life, teachers are limited in their capacity to undertake such a decision process.

In contrast, system 1 actions bypass the working memory and do not require controlled attention (Evans, 2011). These are typically routine tasks that we have become experts at, for example counting backwards by ones. We can instantly and instinctively perform several System 1 tasks simultaneously, such as holding a conversation with someone while walking on flat ground (Kahneman, 2011). System 1 is used as a method to make decisions quickly without applying the cognitive load that would be required by system 2. These systems work together to allow us to perform tasks and make decisions with the minimum of effort when we have enough experience with the situation to make automatic reactions, while allowing for more deliberate thought when needed.

Presently, there are many frameworks that integrate some aspect of dual process theory. These models share many common traits, but Evans cautions against identifying a single work as the definitive or generic theory (2011, p. 100). This field of research has received contributions by several researchers, but the core of the framework comes from the works of Evans, Kahneman, and Stanovich. All three of these researchers have been at the forefront of

this field for the past 40 years, and they have continually refined their understanding of how we use these systems to make decisions.

The presence of dual systems allows for a balance of ease and power in our decision making. At our core, humans are cognitive misers, striving to preserve our mental energy for situations when we really need the effort (Kahneman, 2011; Stanovich, 2012; Stanovich, 2010). System 1 operates continuously and rapidly, with little to no effort on our part (Evans, 2011). By making the vast majority of our decisions using system 1 processes we are able to attend to far more of the world around us (Stanovich, 2010). In situations that we can quickly compare to previous experiences, system 1 will draw on this background to make predictions and shape our judgements (Klein, 2008). It is this way that experts in their craft, can make snap decisions with remarkable accuracy (Kahneman, 2011; Klein, 2008). In other situations, system 1 gathers feelings about situations and extends these emotions into beliefs and ideas far beyond what most people would do consciously (Slovic et al., 2007). System 1 groups, categorizes, and sorts, all without taxing our working memory. In this way it makes judgements more quickly and with far less effort than otherwise possible. Though much of the research that prompted the identification of the dual system model was focussed on identifying biases and errors evident in System 1 processing (for example Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 2011; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2007), in many situations System 1 decisions are just as reliable as more reasoned decisions that can be produced by System 2 (Kahneman, 2011; Stanovich, 2010).

The structure of dual process frameworks suggests that when decision making situations arise, system 1 automatically and unconsciously makes judgements (Evans, 2011; Kahneman,

2011; Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000). That is to say that an instinctual reaction is generated in all situations. This first impression is then passed off to system 2 where it will be examined to determine if it is justified. If it is justified, this initial answer will be accepted and system 2 will only convert the generated ideas into an instruction-compliant response. In scenarios when system 2 deems that this first reaction may not be justified, system 2 will override this first answer and re-evaluate the question to produce a decision that is more suitable (Evans, 2011; Stanovich, 2010).

While decisions such as those under examination in this study are frequently viewed holistically, dual systems theories suggest that decisions are most often the result of a complex series of smaller decisions. Dual process theory suggests that a teacher evaluating a job offer will not simply take in all the available information and maximize personal benefit in a single choice. Instead, the information and options are classified, simplified and filtered as they approach the decision maker (Evans, 2011; Kahneman, 2011). Without consciously thinking or planning, we make these preliminary judgements that may or may not lead to an analytical oversight and correction. This process is undertaken by System 1, reducing the cognitive load placed on System 2. This study examines the degree to which teachers utilize each of these decision making processes. If teachers rely heavily on the system 1, it may be more important for school leaders to make their positions feel like a good option, while if teacher rely more heavily on system 2 it would be more important for school leaders to improve the rational value of the positions that they are trying to fill.

Rational and Rule-Based Decision Making

In broad terms, there are two distinct families of theories about the processes used by individuals in making purposeful decisions. There are those theories that assume decision makers are striving to maximize their own benefit as a result of their choice, and those that suggest that actors function to follow rules based on their identity. March (2004), while finding value in both approaches, has called these groupings 'Logic of Consequence' and 'Logic of Appropriateness' respectively. These distinctions suggest that some decision makers are rational actors driven primarily by the outcomes that may arise as a result of a choice (Logic of Consequence), while others seek instead to follow guiding principles in their processes and of their group (Logic of Appropriateness).

As discussed, early theories in this field held that decision makers would operate rationally, and attempt to optimize the likely outcomes of their choices. It is important for this discussion that the term "rational" be examined and defined as it is used frequently throughout the literature and that use will continue here. While in common usage, "rational" may mean thoughtful, or having reason or intelligence, we are cautioned from applying these lay interpretations of this word to its use in understanding behaviour and decision making (Stanovich, 2010). If we are to accept these virtuous associations with rationality, then we become predisposed to accept that irrational actions are somehow less valuable, organized, and more prone to mistake. All of us, even the most rigidly structured thinkers, regularly display irrational decision making.

In the domain of decision making literature, irrational actions are not necessarily bad or without forward planning. Acts of pure altruism are certainly thoughtful, deliberate and

organized, but in the context of decision making such actions are deemed, by most, to be irrational as they fail to maximize the value of the decision maker. Another example of this can be seen in the Dictator Game. In this frequently reproduced laboratory experiment a subject under experimental conditions is asked to split a sum of money between themselves and a second subject. It is important that the first subject or 'dictator' does not know the second participant before the split is made. After the split, both participants will take their portion and leave. In most settings there is some social expectation of a certain level of equity, but from a pure decision making standpoint, the rational decision would be for the dictator to keep all of the money for him or herself. Despite this rational expectation, most people express some irrationality and give a portion of the money to the other participant. Even when the social expectation is limited almost entirely by not allowing the subjects to meet each other, subjects assuming the 'dictator' role still usually express altruism and give some (though slightly less) of the money to the other subject (Henrich et al., 2005).

There is disagreement, and some debate (see Evans 2011, or Stanovich 2010), in the literature as to what defines rational and irrational. In their gamble experiments, Tversky and Kahneman found that most individuals would reject the opportunity to make wagers that were slightly in their favour (1979). This behaviour is due to most people's innate risk aversion and such actions are called non-rational by Tversky and Kahneman as well as a host of other researchers. However, this same action is described as rational by other writers who contest that by avoiding the anxiety associated with this risk that these subjects are in fact protecting their best interests and as such acting rationally (Gigerenzer, 2000; Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000) While the dividing line remains unclear in the literature as a whole, for the purposes of this

work I will adopt the overarching view that rationality is behaving in a way that maximizes the expected, externally visible, desirable outcomes of a situation. More specifically I will use the framework outlined by March (2004) which postulates that rational procedures are those that work through four basic steps:

1. The question of alternatives: What actions are possible?
2. The question of expectations: What future consequences might follow from each alternative? How likely is each possible consequence, assuming that alternative is chosen?
3. The question of preferences: How valuable (to the decision maker) are the consequences associated with each of the alternatives?
4. The question of the decision rule: How is the choice to be made among the alternatives in terms of the values of their consequences? (p. 2-3)

Logic of Appropriateness, or rule based decision models, are frameworks that suggest that behaviour is not guided by a striving to maximize benefit, but instead by a desire to fulfill rules such as those associated with identity roles. These theories suggest that decision makers either explicitly or implicitly ask themselves the following questions in order to come to action:

1. The question of recognition: What kind of situation is this?
2. The question of identity: What kind of person am I?
3. The question of rules: What does a person such as I ... do in a situation like this? (March, 2004, p. 58)

We are thoroughly socialized and at times explicitly taught how to respond to situations. Organizations develop these rules and spread them to their members to develop standardization and routinization of actions (March, 2004). Nurses may be taught to stop the bleeding of an incoming patient first before taking other actions. This rule is designed by the organization to simplify decision making and hopefully increase patient outcomes (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000). It eliminates the need for the nurse to evaluate potential consequences. Individuals continue to apply role based decision making in far less regimented situations as well. In emergencies, many would adopt the social heuristic 'women and children first' despite this having a negative impact on their own potential outcome (Messick, 1999). Such a decision, one that would not be taken by all, is rooted in our desire to conform to a role in society and an identity within our culture. In the Dictator game presented earlier the altruistic behaviour may be a result of the participants seeking to preserve their identity code of being a fair person. Education systems, religious teachings, and social groupings all confer expectation on how to identify and ultimately act in particular situations (March, 2004).

Such theories rely heavily on the impact of identity. While some identities are clear and unmistakable--I am a father and a teacher--others are more nebulous and transient. My connection to a group of strangers in the same situation as me may have an impact on my decisions as demonstrated in the Asch conformity experiments or the bystander effect (Asch, 1940; Darley & Latane, 1968). In both of these classic experiments, most participants changed dramatically from their normal behaviours in order not to stand out in a crowd. In the Asch experiment this conformity resulted in the changing of opinions as to which of several lines was longer. Despite participants easily identifying the correct picture, most would change their

observed choice to match the vocal opinions of research confederates posing as others participating in the same experiment. This change of behaviour to fit in with a group has been demonstrated even more dramatically in the experiments conducted by Darley and Latane (1968) that had a testing room filling with smoke while participants answered a questionnaire. While control subjects in a room by themselves quickly left the testing room to seek help, test subjects placed in a room of confederates that did not appear to notice the smoke remained far longer without seeking help or in some cases refused to ever leave their newfound group. Together these studies demonstrate the way that even in newly formed groups, people look to this group example to guide their decision making. "If other members of this group do not think that smoke filling a room is a problem, then I don't either." Support for rule-based theories has come from evidence that altering or reinforcing identity roles has clearly observable impacts on the decision made. Messick found that changing a participant's title in the ultimatum game (an experiment closely related to the dictator game) had a significant impact on their actions (1999). This role of assumed identities is perhaps most famously evident in the Zimbardo prison experiment when subjects took on the mantle of prison guard and made horrific decisions based on that role (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). In more discrete ways, marketers are constantly playing on this effect when they position their products as the choice that a particular identity group would make. Examples of this can be seen in campaigns such as; Pepsi- the choice of the new generation, and Old Spice's call for customers to "smell like a man." This use of referencing desirable identity groups is also prevalent in the marketing material that international schools use to attract teachers. In advertisements placed in the February 2014 edition of *The International Educator*, Seoul Foreign School announces that "(their) teachers are

passionate, inspiring, and caring” (p. 91) while the International School of Beijing states “we inspire creativity and foster innovation. Do you? (p.89)”

There is some degree of inter-connection between rational choice and rule based theories. Proponents of rationality theories frequently point to the social benefits garnered by conforming to role expected behaviour. These researchers argue that these social benefits are actively sought out by decision makers, and thus decisions that might otherwise be seen to deviate from rational theories are accepted under that model. Likewise, rule based theorists posit that many identities may place great value on making reasoned decisions, thus making rational choice a subset of many rule based frameworks. In this way, theorists do not so much adopt one side of this debate instead of the other, but instead they accept this interplay and position their frameworks according to which of these models they believe provides greater control and motivation for decision making (March, 2004).

Group Dynamics

This discussion has thus far examined decision making from the reference point of a single actor. While this is valuable, we must consider that many international teachers are not operating alone, but instead part of a teaching couple or teaching family. For teaching families, decisions during job searches will impact the work, school, and living environments for several people and as such are typically undertaken by more than a single decision maker. A couple at a job fair may be presented with opportunities that advance one or the other of the teachers’ careers but not both in a single posting. Balancing competing opportunities and desires is a hallmark of international careers.

The research distinguishes judgement behaviour of teams (a consistent group that consists entirely of people that share the same preferences and identity roles), and groups that have inconsistent goals or identities. While complete synchronization of relevant desires and identities is unlikely in most groups, most teaching couples may be described as teams due to the close alignment of the spouses' beliefs, wishes, and identity constructs. Even within teams however, the shared preferences may go unrealized, or the shared identities unfulfilled because of difficulty in communication, or collaboration (March, 2004). Other couples and families are clearly heterogeneous in their desires and identities and examining how these groups come to a single decision is important to understand teacher recruitment as a whole.

The research is divided as to how people function within competing interest groups. Some results suggest that all decision makers within that group will strive to best fulfill their desires or fulfill the rules associated with their identity and expect that other group members will do likewise (March, 2004). This contrasts with frameworks that propose that pro-social or altruistic motivations frequently appear in group decision making (Chinchilla, Moragas, & Kim, 2012). Much like other aspects of decision making research, this apparent division is merged by some who suggest that pleasing their spouse is one of the preferences of most decision makers and likely fits within most role identities. As such any seemingly altruistic gesture can be interpreted as keeping with the self-interested model.

The majority of group problem solving frameworks describe a two-step process. In the first stage, the group works to develop an agreed upon set of common preferences or identity rules (March, 2004). This phase relies upon communication by teams and negotiation by heterogeneous groups. It determines the guiding principles for the group in the next phase.

During the second stage the group attempts to use new-found vision to solve the problem it faces (Kerr & Tindale, 2004; March, 2004). Despite the implication given by this theory that these steps are separate and sequential, field studies often show groups frequently moving back and forth through these two tasks as they work together to solve the problem before them (Kerr & Tindale, 2004).

Elimination by Aspect and Satisficing

One of the tenets of decision making theories, especially those that are informed by rationality or bounded-rationality, is the goal for optimization. Applied to this situation under study here, this assumption suggests that teachers should be striving to find a job with the best possible school that would hire them. Likewise, schools attempting to optimize should be trying to the best possible candidate. Despite this assumption that involved parties will strive for the ideal, there is evidence to suggest that frequently decision makers will settle for what they deem to be 'good enough' (Ben-Haim, 2006; March, 2004; Simon, 2000). Satisficing theories, a term appropriated by Simon (1955), frame decision making as a search for value that stops a threshold value is reached (Ben-Haim, 2006; March, 2004; Simon, 1955). In other words, a job-seeking teacher may not really be looking for the best job, but one that is good enough to end the search and associated costs. The particular level required to halt the search for better alternatives is adjustable. When a decision maker has success, they raise the cut-off point for future choices. Likewise, if options fail to meet the expected standard, then this level of acceptance is lowered for future decisions (March, 2004). For example, a teacher that has had success in their job-seeking over their career will expect to find a better job than they hoped for

last time, but if they fail to land a job after several interviews they will revise these expectations downward (March, 2004).

Satisficing is closely related to elimination by aspect, a decision making heuristic articulated by Tversky (1972). This rule begins with the decision maker identifying the important aspect or aspects and also deciding on a cut-off value demanded for that aspect. For example, a teacher could decide that the most important thing for them is salary and they want a minimum of \$50,000. All schools that do not offer this level of remuneration are eliminated from consideration (Tversky, 1972). Tversky suggests that this tool is used to reduce overall potential choices and allow decision makers to approach the narrowed field with other techniques. Such an approach may be useful for teachers considering the thousands of international school that need teachers each year. By using a heuristic rule to eliminate a large number of unsuitable choices teachers may be better prepared to make decision.

Game Theory and Matching

In the economics of choice, most decisions come down to a single party or group making a selection. However, this single actor dynamic is not the case in the job market. Not only are the teachers and teaching families in this study working to find new schools, but at the same time school leaders are seeking out teachers to join their organization. As such, understanding this situation may be informed by work on game theory and the matching problem (or the mate choice problem as it is referred to in the biology literature (Ramsey, 2008)).

Game theory has been used to develop models for multi-participant exchanges such as the one under study here. One of the fundamental questions that game theorists strive answer

is to identify the Nash equilibrium, or the idealized behaviour in a system assuming that all other participants are fully knowledgeable and also seeking an idealized result (Gintis, 2009). Despite few researchers examining job matching under these conditions, there have been some attempts to develop these idealized models. For example, Ramsey uses game theory to develop a Nash equilibrium equation for just such a scenario (2008). While his work may lead to more adaptive models, it is currently unsuitable for field application as it relies on several unavailable assumptions, namely that all candidates will use that same approach, that there is no cost to extending a job search, that all parties know their relative values, and that all parties share opinions on the values of the jobs and job seekers.

While direct application of Game Theory findings are of little value to this study, these assumptions raise several issues that must be considered if any definitive model is going to be applied to this job search situation. First, how accurate are both the schools' and the candidates' perceptions of their value relative to their competition? There is certainly no single truth to the value represented by either a school or a candidate as these values would vary greatly depending on the potential match. Despite this we can observe evidence of general valuation very easily at a job fair. Teachers with experience in high-demand areas are offered countless interviews while less experienced teachers or those with weak references are offered fewer. Likewise, during interview sign up time some schools are bombarded with requests, while others sit aside waiting for the top schools to fill their interview schedules and start turning candidates away. There is also clear evidence that both of these groups consider their own attractiveness as well as the attractiveness of others (Chandler, 2011; The International Schools Review Forum, 2013). Second, the cost in effort, time, emotion and money to maintain

a job or candidate search is not inconsequential. Even if a school or teacher expects to find a better match by attending one more job fair, it is not always clear if that choice can be justified in the face of this additional cost. This decision to continue the search may also contribute to satisficing as mentioned earlier. Third, the assumption that all parties are rational actors within the bounds of the environment raises issues of experience participating in this exchange. An experienced school head may have attended 50 or more job fairs and hired over a thousand candidates over their career, while teacher candidates at the same job fair may be searching for their first or second job. It may be safe to assume that the school head is aware of the game dynamics but such an assumption is likely unwarranted for many teachers or even less experienced school leaders. This mismatch of knowledge ensures that some participants will certainly act in unexpected ways.

Game theorists have developed ideas about this type of multi-party choice problem referred to as matching theories (see Boswell, Roehling, Lepine, & Moynihan, 2003; Mortensen & Pissarides, 1994; Turban & Cable, 2003). Unfortunately, this field of exploration is not perfectly suited to help understand the situation international schools as the matching theories generated by these efforts assume a fairly steady pattern of new job creation and a likewise predictable flow of job seekers. In the case of international schools the vast majority of employer-employee matching takes place over a period of two or three months each year. An employer cannot simply wait until they find the ideal applicant. As the recruiting season progresses fewer and fewer applicant are available, and the position must be filled. Matching theories, such as that proposed by Mortensen & Pissarides (1994), assume that employees have the ability to wait for future job openings if those currently in the market are deemed

unsatisfactory. In the situation facing international school teachers however, few new positions are likely to be generated after the spring of each year (Odland, 2007).

The issue presented by this matching problem is one of ensuring efficiency within a market with tight time constraints. Should a teacher accept the job offer they just received or hold out for something better (and lose the option to accept the current offer)? Schools at job fairs are not allowed to offer the same position to two teachers at the same time. It can be assumed that this rule of fairness is observed outside the job fair environment as well. With that in mind, if we accept that teachers have a period of time to consider all offers (one day is the norm at job fairs) then offering jobs to candidates that ultimately will not accept them becomes an inefficient behaviour on the part of schools, in that it prevents them from making offers to more likely matches. Likewise, teachers have a limited capacity for search behaviours. You can only interview with so many schools. If there is little or no chance of communication with a school translating into a contract offer, then that action is wasted and could have been better used pursuing a more suitable school.

To account for this matching problem, schools appear to seek out candidates that have similar relative attractiveness (Alexander, 2011). For example a school in a more difficult to staff location or with a less attractive compensation package may seek out new graduates or other less marketable teachers. It is unclear if teachers make the same calculations in their job search.

Teachers respond to the realities of this matching problem by making efforts to control timing of the recruiting events. Teachers examined here frequently sought to garner more offers when they came close to the deadline for accepting a marginally attractive offer. Other

teachers would seek to extend acceptance deadlines for the same purpose of trying to find a more attractive offer before rejecting or committing to the initial offer. These individuals are not only deciding on the single offer before them, but also demonstrating an awareness of other potentials as indicated by the game theory and matching literature (Gintis, 2009).

Summary

This chapter examined economic, education, and decision making literature to address four main concepts informing this research as its conceptual frame. First, it was demonstrated through a review of the available research that competition for international teachers is very high. Second, the impacts of this competition were examined. The literature suggests that effective recruitment and retention of teachers is a vital challenge facing schools today. This task is even more important in international schools due to the outsized role that teachers play in establishing and maintaining school culture. It was found that international schools are expanding their recruitment effort at the expense of quality and at increased costs. Many schools are hiring teachers with lower levels of experience or training. This practice has a negative impact on overall teacher quality and school effectiveness. Third, this chapter examined the existing research and theory describing the factors of attraction that influence international teacher job decision making. Despite this scarcity of research, studies examining teacher surveys have indicated that a positive working relationship with administrators, external working conditions, and personal satisfaction are all important factors that may attract teachers to a school. It is however currently unclear how this attraction directly influences teacher decision making. The need for further examination was discussed due to the lack of

evidence in the literature of how teachers operationalize their stated preferences. Finally, literature discussing the current theoretical understanding of decision making was examined. There is evidence that the choices facing teachers are complex and shaped by many influencing elements. Research examining decision making suggests that decisions can be made using intuitive or analytical processes or a combination of the two. Simple decisions are made by our intuitive system automatically, without conscious knowledge. At other times, we check these involuntary ideas for validity using our analytical system and adjust if necessary. Decision making approaches can also be divided into those that seek to maximize our personal benefit and those that are primarily guided by our identity roles and rules of action that come from those identities. This field of study has also identified that groups, such as teaching couples, may have competing interests and this could further complicate decisions. Like many areas of this research, it is assumed that group members seek to optimize their own results regardless of what this behaviour may have on the group as a whole. This desire for optimization is brought into question however by examples of decision makers satisficing, or ending a search when they find an alternative that is deemed 'good enough'. This review of the literature guides this research as it provides conceptual frameworks for the two questions under examination.

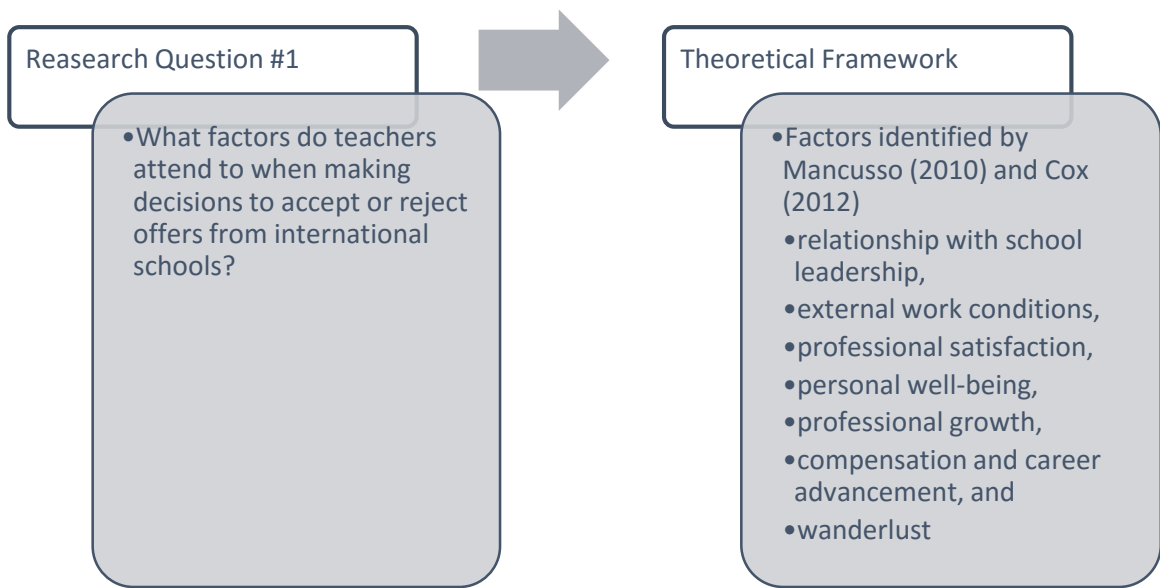


Figure 2: Theoretical framework for research question # 1

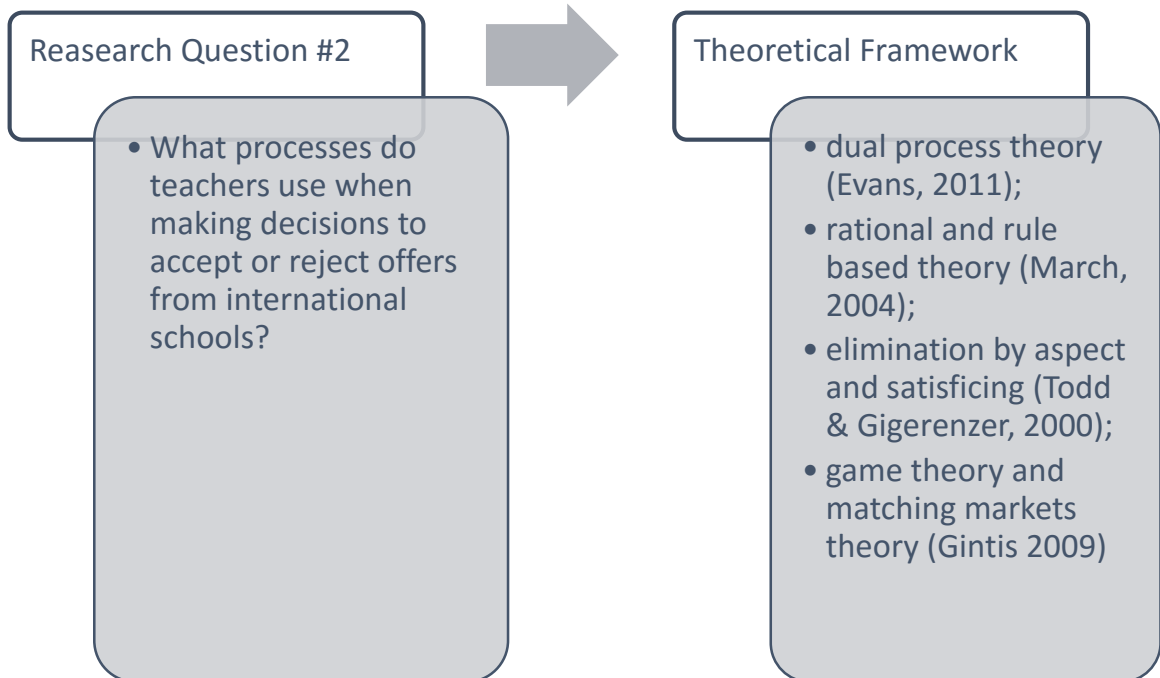


Figure 3: Theoretical framework for research question # 2

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will detail the methods employed in this study aimed at describing and interpreting the decision making processes and factors of attraction for international school teachers during recruitment fairs. Verbal protocol analysis is used as a method to gather data from teachers who evaluate job offers, and the method is used to interpret this evidence to develop guidelines for hiring international school leaders. This chapter will also include, a detailed discussion of verbal protocol analysis and its suitability for use here, details of the participant selection procedures, and methods used for data gathering and analysis.

Philosophical Approach

All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 22)

Positivism and postpositivism were both considered by this researcher as philosophical approaches to this research due to their view of truth. Positivism suggests that the world can be described objectively and without value based bias. Through empirical study an absolute understanding of how things are can be achieved (Mills, Eurepos, & Wiebe, 2010). This view is in contrast with postpositivism, an approach that views understanding of reality only through the imperfect lens of both the researcher and the observed. Postpositivists believe that while

reality exists, the limitations of our knowing prevent this truth from ever be fully understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; D. D. C. Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

Ultimately, this researcher approached this work with a postpositivist approach. My existing understanding of this and other complex social phenomena lead me to feel that while objective truth may exist, that complete and accurate understanding of that reality is impossible. My hope with this project and with others that I am involved with is that I can draw ever closer to understanding truth. The complexities revealed in the literature review process of this study make it even more apparent to me that this field of inquiry is value-bound. The version of reality that this study uncovers is undoubtedly an imperfect one biased by the values that I hold as well as those held by the study participants.

Overview of Research Methods

This research is a qualitative study examining the decision making of teachers as they consider job offers from international schools. To gather data on this phenomenon, this researcher conducted verbal protocol assessment interviews with 20 teachers at international school job fairs in Bangkok, Thailand and Dubai, UAE during the spring of 2014. These interviews produced data that described the thinking patterns of these teachers as they decided to accept or reject one or more job offers from international schools. Examination of this data followed the pattern for analysis of VPA data described by Chi (1997). This process is inductive in nature but also informed by the factors of teacher attraction identified by Cox (2012) and decision making theory informed by March (2004), and Kahneman (2011).

Rationale for Selecting Qualitative Methods

There has been a long debate as to the relative merits, validity, and appropriateness of qualitative versus quantitative research (National Research Council, 2002). While it is beyond the scope of this study to engage deeply in discussion of either of these two paradigms, it is valuable for the issues presented here to engage in a brief examination of the strengths and weaknesses of both.

The associated methodologies that we refer to as qualitative generally share an orientation of analyzing issues within their natural context (Patton, 2001; Smith, 2004). This approach allows researchers to observe behaviour both closely and within a natural setting. That in turn promotes a deep understanding of the problem and a richness of the data not seen in decontextualized laboratory research or in other situations where researchers seek to control rather than embrace context. This contextualization of the issue allows for researchers to more intimately understand the problem as it occurs in real world setting. With these benefits come problems of selectivity, a wider field of variables to interpret, and subjectivity stemming from the researcher as the data collection instrument (Chi, 1997). While field notes and interviews allow for a deep understanding of the situation under assessment, the complex contextual environments of these studies allow for the production of theories. Conversely, quantitative measures strive to control environmental factors and most often seek out data sources that are quantified and measureable and not open to interpretation or subjectivity (Shaffer & Serlin, 2004).

As the purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical explanation of teachers' behaviour in the real life situation of deciding to accept or reject a job offer, qualitative

methodology is used here. This choice was made both in order to expand the body of knowledge in this field from the existing quantitative and descriptive base that currently exists and also to capture the importance of the setting on these decisions. Surveys taken months before a job will likely generate very different data than close observation in the actual setting that these decisions take place in. This study witnesses this process as closely as possible and uses the data gathered from those observations to generate theoretical framework to guide international school leaders based on this understanding of how teachers make these important decisions.

Research Purpose and Questions

Despite the widely accepted importance of effective teacher recruitment, directors and other hiring officials at international schools have little theory or research findings to inform their hiring practice. A clear understanding of how teachers make decisions would allow school leaders to alter recruitment practices to improve their ability to hire desirable teachers. This study will generate guidelines for international school leaders to recruit teachers based on the job-searching behaviours and decision making approaches used by teachers in this labour market. The two questions guiding this research are:

Question #1: What factors of attraction do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Question #2: What processes do teachers use when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Data Gathering

This study does not ask what decisions teachers are making, but instead what factors of attraction shape the decisions made by teachers, and what information and processes are used to arrive at decisions. In the simplest terms, this research seeks to explain why and how these decisions are being made in competitive markets. The observable result of a teacher accepting a particular job becomes clear once it is made, however the steps that led to that choice and how job offers are evaluated is currently not known. As discussed earlier, current theory in the recruitment literature assumes that teachers are taking jobs in an effort to maximize their overall compensation, (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Mastekaasa, 2011), despite research on decision making that suggests people often make choices for unexpected reasons that may not result in optimal outcomes (Campitelli & Gobet, 2010; Hebert, Debring, Mueller, & Van Ormer, 2006; Rothrock & Yin, 2008).

Obscuring better knowledge of this process is the private and internal nature of thought and decision making. We can see the decision, but not the path taken to get there. This study will illuminate that path and allow both teachers and administrators clarity into how these decisions are being made. To provide such insight it was required that this study develop a data gathering process that allows the data to represent the thought processes of the participant teachers while they were making the decisions under study here as accurately as possible.

The goal of any data gathering approach is to provide the research with data that allows access to potential answers of the questions under investigation. In most situations, no single method perfectly produces the evidence required to fully understand the question posed. That is the case in this study. Instead, several data collection methods were considered and

eventually rejected as unsuitable to uncover valid understandings about how international school teachers make recruiting decisions. While it is tempting to try to find answers to the questions under study here by directly asking teachers how they make decisions or through close examination of the process, it is unlikely that such methods would be fruitful as teachers may be unaware of their decision making processes, and fabricate inaccurate reports of methods used (Campitelli & Gobet, 2010; Olson, 2006). Likewise, observation methodologies were rejected as they are unlikely to reveal substantial new evidence about the internal decision process used by teachers making these decisions (Ericsson & Simon, 1987).

The complex and hidden nature of decision making also led this project away from field interview or case study methods. Case study allows the researcher to see an issue up close and within its context (Yin, 2003). Despite this, in situations where the cases under study (in this instance the recruiting teachers) do not have a complete understanding of the questions under investigation (as in this instance on how they make recruiting decisions), this method may fail to uncover accurate or complete information (Yin, 2003). If the teachers in this study were unwilling or unable to describe how they came to their decisions, a phenomenon that is not uncommon in decision making (Kahneman, 2011; Nagai, Taura, & Sano, 2010; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), then interviews and observation would be ineffective. It is my judgement that the nature of recruitment decision making is so obscured that case study techniques would not provide clear insight into how teachers make job-search decisions. Additionally, the limited time available to follow these teachers while they make their decisions also make case study an inappropriate choice for this research.

Ultimately, Verbal Protocol Analysis (VPA) was selected for this study for its ability to produce rich and accurate data of otherwise difficult to observe phenomena and the ability to quantitative and qualitative analyze the data generated by this method.

Verbal Protocol Analysis

To overcome difficulties in researching and observing thoughts and other internal behaviours, researchers have used process tracing. Process tracing refers to an associated group of research methodologies that allows investigators to gain insight into cognitive processes by recording other more readily observable behaviours (Schulte-Mecklenbeck, Kuhberger, & Raynard, 2011). Process tracing methods may observe eye movements, reaction times, or other conscious and unconscious reactions to situations. In research using process tracing, the easily observed behaviour is recorded and serves as a proxy for the unobservable behaviour under examination. One such process tracing method used here is verbal protocol analysis (VPA). VPA uses verbalized thoughts to represent the cognition experienced while problem solving. VPA, also called the think aloud or talk aloud (TA) method, involves subjects verbalizing their thought processes as they undertaking decision making activities. Subjects in TA studies do not try to explain or rationalize their thoughts, they simply report what they are thinking as accurately and promptly as they can (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b). This stream of verbalization is recorded, transcribed, broken into task relevant statements, and coded to provide insight as to why and how the decisions were made (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b; Kuusela & Paul, 2000).

As discussed earlier, decision making can be analytical or intuitive. VPA allows researchers access to both these processes by revealing what information is being attended to, and how that information is evaluated or used to formulate ideas and ultimately decisions. By following this process as it happens, we can observe the decision making approach used by the subject. Ericsson and Simon suggest that VPA reveals the “sequence of internal states successively transformed by a series of information processes” (1993, p. 11). Rather than simply seeing the end decision, VPA also allows researchers to collect data on the process and the specific steps taken to get there. It is this insight that makes VPA so well suited to the questions under study here.

Validity of VPA

There have been many studies that have examined the validity of VPA as a research tool. While use of VPA and related techniques has taken place for a century now, discussion of its value and validity as a research approach is led by Ericson and Simon. The title and defiant tone of their paper, “Verbal Reports as Data” (1980), shed light on the academic culture of the time.

This research makes a case that the most decision making occurs through a series of smaller steps. In each step, the pertinent factors that influence the choice are stored briefly in the short-term memory of the decision maker and then forgotten as the individual moves on to the next stage in their task. VPA can be used to access what elements are being attended to in the short-term memory during these tasks and therefore reveal what processes are important to the ultimate decision. This method simply calls for the participant to verbalize their

thoughts. The lack of leading questions prevents subjects from attending to ideas suggested by the researcher or otherwise being allowing this method to alter their normal decision making process.

Reviews of the methodology have suggested that VPA is effective for examining thinking patterns of decision makers as it allows the researcher greater access to the examined ideas and steps in decision making than other interview techniques (Ericsson & Simon, 1993a; Kuusela & Paul, 2000). Additionally, Chi argues that VPA is especially suited for psychology and education research as it allows researchers opportunities to elicit, manage, and interpret 'messy data' (1997, p. 271).

Despite the growing support for VPA, its use has not gone entirely unchallenged. Even prior to Ericsson and Simon's work, Nisbett and Wilson argued that verbal reports are fundamentally flawed as the subject may be unaware of a) their response to the situation, b) stimuli that may have influenced their response, and c) the interactions that took place between any stimuli and response (1977, p. 254). Fundamentally, their argument is that as so much of human behaviour is guided by decisions that we make intuitively, we often do not attend to all of the factors that contribute to our decisions on a conscious level. As such, any discussion of what influenced those decisions is flawed, as it will force participants to access those important factors and thus alter their responses. Russo, Johnson, & Stephens, (1989), also critically examine VPA by testing for protocol reactivity and nonveridicality. Protocol reactivity is a situation where the production of verbal protocols changes the thinking pattern of the subject, and nonveridicality is when the produced verbal protocols do not accurately describe the mental processes used. Their experimental work found that despite the design

efforts of VPA to have limited impact on the subject, creating verbalizations has an increased cognitive load on the reporter and slight social effects as well. The increased cognitive effort resulted in slightly slower response times in many tasks. The social effect contributed to greater emphasis placed on accuracy by subjects in speed based tasks. Nonveridicality was greatest when subjects forgot their thought patterns, an issue that happened much more often in retrospective protocols.

Taken together, these works suggest two key dimensions that have been shown to be important in assessing the validity of VPA: the timing of the report in relation to the primary task (is it concurrent or retrospective) and the cognitive mapping between the primary task and the verbal report (Patrick & James, 2004; Rothrock & Yin, 2008).

The Effect of Timing

In VPA, verbalization can occur either during the primary task (concurrent data) or after the completion of the task (retrospective data). Each of these approaches has their strengths and weaknesses, and specific issues relating to the effect of timing that are worth noting here.

Concurrent verbalization, the approach used in this study, is used as a window into the thoughts of the subject as they occur. Under concurrent verbalization methods, once the subject is presented with a problem, they immediately begin to share their thoughts as they are formed, and they continue to do so as they work towards a solution. This immediacy allows the verbal statements to accurately reflect the cognition of the subject (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b). While the concurrent process is accurate in revealing thoughts, as noted earlier it has been found in several studies to have the effect of slowing the problem solving process (Ericsson &

Simon, 1993b; Kuusela & Paul, 2000; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Russo et al., 1989). This effect is minimized or not observable when subjects are attending to thoughts that are already language based. Conversely, the delay is greatest when subjects are asked to comment on thoughts that are not held as verbal ideas (Kuusela & Paul, 2000). It is generally thought that it is the task of finding and articulating the words to describe thoughts that results in this effect. This slight delay can alter the function of the primary task both by creating greater opportunities for processing or by causing the subject to miss time sensitive stimuli (Kuusela & Paul, 2000). This effect should not have a noticeable impact on the research proposed here as the decision situations put to the teachers volunteers in this study will not be particularly time sensitive. Teachers will have hours to make their decisions, and the minutes that participating in this study will slow any decision are unlikely to cause a subject to run out of time or miss further input stimuli. Where there is a risk of an effect having an impact is if participation in this research causes subjects to attend more carefully to details or otherwise alter their decision making as a result of producing verbal protocols.

Generating data from retrospective analysis involves asking subjects to replay thoughts and problem solving behaviours that they have already completed. As the subjects are not attempting to produce protocols while they complete the task under study, this method is immune from having the verbalization delays affect the primary task (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, 1993b; Kuusela & Paul, 2000). However, these sources have their own set of biases and errors. Firstly, these reports are subject to failings of memory recall and therefore are prone to omissions (forgotten data) and commissions (false data) (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, 1993b). Subjects may also inadvertently combine similar memory structures and recall details about

similar but different events than the task under assessment (Kuusela & Paul, 2000). These effects can be minimized by calling for the verbalization as quickly after the completion of the primary task as possible. Even under such a condition, retrospective verbalization still has potential for biases and will not be used in this study.

Cognitive Mapping between Primary Task and Verbal Protocols

In addition to timing, the second factor that impacts the accuracy of VPA is the way that the subject holds the idea prior to verbalization. In situations where the task that the subject is engaged in is verbally reasoned, then thinking aloud has been shown to have little or no impact on performance (Chi, 1997; Ericsson & Simon, 1980; Kuusela & Paul, 2000). However, if the subject is forced to construct a verbal record of what is going on where none currently exists, for example explaining a physical process or a the perception of a smell, then this recoding of ideas into verbalizations can alter both the behaviours and cognitive processes of the subject (van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994). Primarily the impact of the extra cognitive load is to slow down the normal decision pattern (Kuusela & Paul, 2000; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). This effect should not have a serious impact this study as the cognitive tasks examined here, as it is likely that many parts of the decision making will not require further verbal construction. The mental constructions of the issues considered in a job offer situation are most often verbally coded. This judgment was put forth by Barber and Roehling (1993) who successfully used VPA to examine decision making of job-seekers. In their study, Barber and Roehling found no significant differences between the decisions made by subjects participating in VPA style

interviews and similar subjects in their control group (1993). In this study, VPA allowed for an analysis of what factors of available jobs motivated applicants to apply.

There are additional weaknesses and limitations to VPA not previously discussed. While concurrent VPA seldom alters the cognitive processes used by decision makers, there are social factors that can have an impact on the functioning of the primary task (van Someren et al., 1994). For example, if a subject forgets to think aloud and has to be reminded by the observer this may create irritation or anxiety. Both of these emotional states may impact the thoughts and reports produced by the subject. Developing strong observer/subject trust, and allowing the subject to become comfortable with the practice of thinking aloud can reduce this effect (van Someren et al., 1994). To achieve these goals, the subjects in this study will first practice using think aloud methods with this researcher on decisions not associated to the questions proposed here. This practice period will allow everyone involved to become more familiar with each other and the methods used.

Method

Participant Selection and the Recruitment Process

Participant recruitment and selection took place over several steps. After receiving ethics clearance from the University of Calgary's Conjoint Facilities Research Ethics Board (Appendix A), all teacher candidates registered for the International School Services and Search Associates Bangkok, Thailand job fairs and for the Search Associates job fair in Dubai, UAE in the spring of 2014 were approached by email and asked to consider volunteering for this study (Appendix B). These emails were sent by the recruitment agencies to preserve the anonymity of

their teacher candidates. Their reports indicate that approximately 1500 teacher candidates received this request.

This email briefly described the study and directed those with interest to potentially be involved to email this researcher or visit a provided website with further details about the study (Appendix C). If after reading this more detailed information on that site, the potential participants had questions, they were asked to email those to this researcher. Those that were interested in participating at that time were provided by email or through the website with a detailed consent form (Appendix F) that would be completed and returned to this researcher before any gathering of data. Once this consent form was completed, participants were directed to an online form that asks for contact information as well as biographical data about their marital status, age, years of teaching experience, what job search methods they intended to use, and what job fairs they planned to attend that year. Finally, the volunteers were asked to suggest times during the third week of November when they could be contacted by telephone or video call.

From this group of approximately 1500 job seeking teachers who received the initial email asking for their participation, 57 candidates completed the informed consent and agreed to the initial interview. As this was a manageable number for the structure of this study, I did not have to solicit further for additional participants at this stage, nor did I eliminate any of these volunteers.

The demographics of the volunteers that presented at this stage were overwhelmingly female (42 female and 15 male) and single teachers (45 singles and 6 couples). While the exact composition of international teachers is unclear, most research assumes that the demographics

of this field closely resembles the domestic American teacher population which is also predominantly female though significantly more likely to be married than seen in this group (TNTP, 2012).

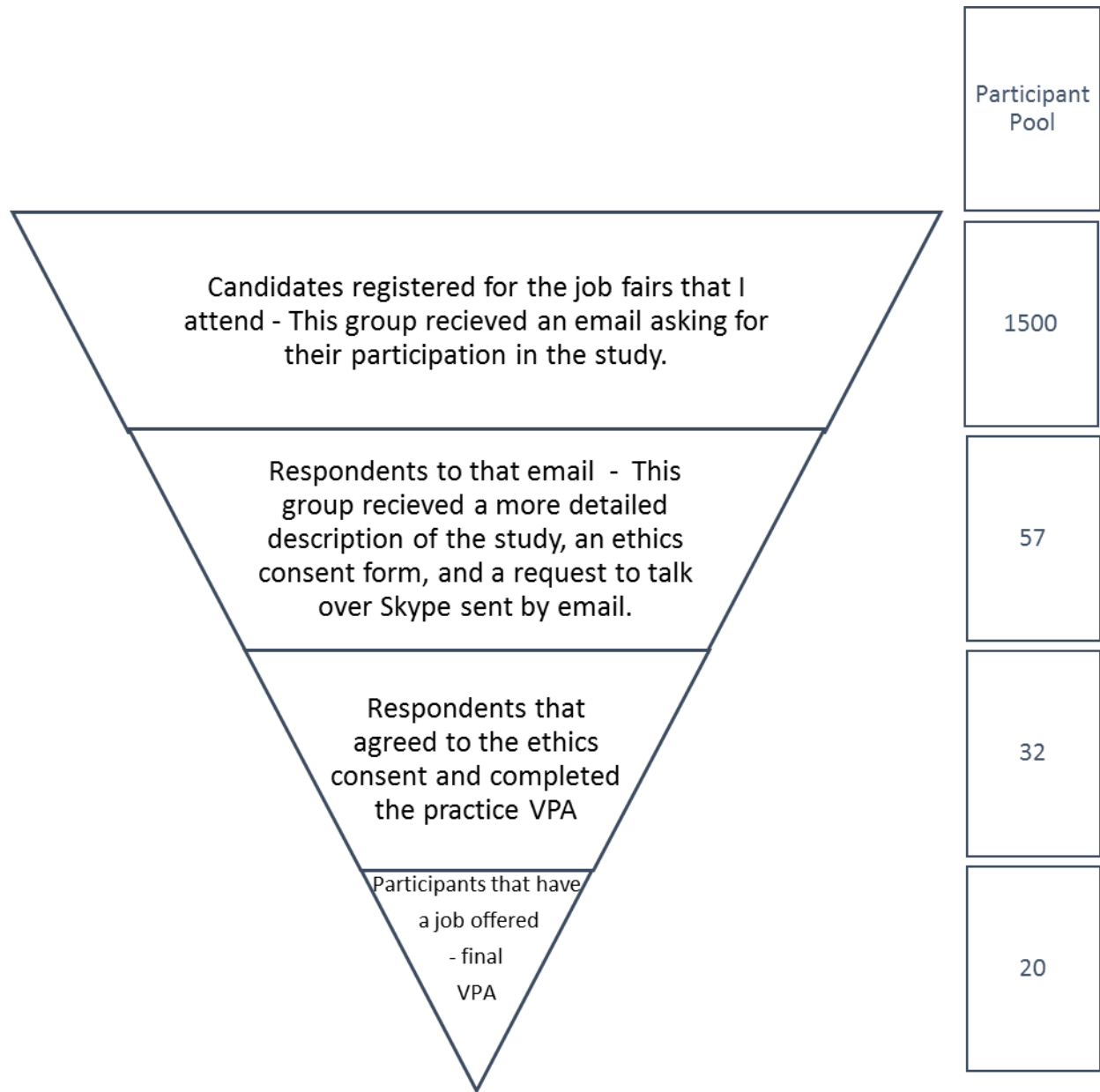


Figure 4. Candidate Pool by Stage

Practicing Verbal Protocol Analysis

Shortly before the job fairs, the volunteers participated in a brief Skype call to both confirm their biographical data as well as to increase their familiarity with the VPA process. The use of practice trials reduces the likelihood of reactivity causing invalidity during the data collection (Patrick & James, 2004). After basic introductions, I proceeded from a standard script (Appendix D) that asks the participant to make two basic decisions while practicing VPA.

After conducting two successful think aloud procedures the volunteers were thanked for their time, and given a chance to ask any questions that they might have. We then made plans to meet in person at the start of the job fair.

Of the 57 volunteers that responded to the initial email, 32 completed this practice stage. Others were unavailable due to time commitments, did not respond to further emails, or opted to exit the study. Those that maintained their willingness to participate, but could not talk before the job fairs were continued in the study with the practice procedure moved into the actual job fair experience. The non-responsive teachers were eliminated from this study.

Once at the job fair I made contact with these volunteers and arranged a time to meet after the first day of interviews. Volunteers that did not attend the job fair as planned were eliminated from the study. Likewise, volunteers that did not receive an offer at the job fair, or did not meet with me during the time that they decided if they would accept a job offer were also eliminated from the study. Several teachers that had received but not responded to the initial email solicitation joined the study at the job fair. These late additions all completed the practice VPA session in person during the early stages of the job fair and were added to the participant group.

Ultimately 20 participants completed the final VPA session and have been included in the data set for this study.

Data Collection

The VPA sessions were conducted in the job fair hotel. These sessions were audio recorded using a hand phone to facilitate later transcription. Since the subjects' TA protocols can be influenced by instructions given by the researcher (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b), careful attention was paid to giving all subjects the same minimal instructions. This replicated what was used during the practice session.

Interviews followed a VPA format detailed in the script and procedures recorded in Appendix E. The fundamental philosophy of these interviews was to create the environment where the participants could continually share their thoughts as they examined the job offers before them.

These data collection procedures are shaped by successful VPA studies. The earliest VPA studies used simple language directing the subject to "try to think aloud" (Duncker, 1926 as cited in Ericsson & Simon, 1993b) or to "tell me everything that passes through your head during your work searching for the solution to the problem" (Claarede, 1934 as cited in Ericsson & Simon, 1993b). These directions allow the subject to create data of their cognitive patterns while having little or no impact on those patterns themselves (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b). Improper instructions can lead to a separation between the attended task, in this case decision making, and verbalization (Russo et al., 1989). Most often, this reactivity comes from instructions that call for the subjects to not only verbalize thoughts but also to explain or

rationalize those ideas (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Such an instruction changes the thought structure. To combat any tendency for subjects to assume this role of justifying their ideas, some VPA studies have taken proactive measures and added to their instructions to clarify the desired behaviours in the TA:

“Do not try to explain anything to anyone else. Pretend there is no one here but yourself. Do not tell about the solution but solve it.” (Krutetskii 1976, as cited in Ericsson & Simon, 1993)

During the data gathering sessions all efforts were made to reduce the number of distractions and other stimuli as these can halt the verbalization process (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). Throughout the time of recording, it is important for the researcher to be unobtrusive as possible (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b). This prevents social expectations from altering or impeding verbalizations. It is for these reasons that I attempted to remain out of the subject’s line of vision and speak as little as possible.

While most VPA studies are laboratory based, the work conducted here was examined in context. Subjects did not solve the same problem, but instead they were working from within their own unique situations trying to best choose their future career paths. This aspect allows this study the advantage of seeing decision making across several distinct contexts. With this comes the challenge of having to remain flexible to best gather data from the subjects. Verbalizations will be concurrent with decision making and subjects will be given as few distractions or prompts as required to stimulate thinking aloud.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process that includes compiling, coding, and categorizing data (Creswell, 2009). These initial steps allow the researcher to understand and describe the event under study and ultimately this evidence supports explanations for how or why those events occur. Procedures used in this research follows the detailed VPA analysis procedures described by Chi (1997). While most qualitative methods use coding to categorize data, this study uses coding as more than simply sorting but as an opportunity to relate to and construct understanding of the data.

Early planning for this research included strategies for the analysis of data which included rigorous statistical analysis of the total protocols used by participating teachers as well as the qualitative approach described above. This mixed methods approach is supported by Chi (1997) as suitable for VPA research. Despite this initial plan, after gathering the data, these types of attempts at a numerical analysis of the total protocols across the codes assigned quickly were revealed to be unhelpful to the goal of better the decision making of teachers. Problems noted included the fact that some teachers were clearly more verbose than others and as such had more overall protocols given during their interview experience. Others circled back to one or two factors or decision making strategies several times in their interview. It is unclear if this repetition was due to the overwhelming importance of those factors, or if it was simply a coping strategy to help them to deal with the stress of the job search and interview process, but it resulted in some teachers producing more than double the total number of protocols than others. It was decided that using this data to reveal the observed behaviours and

practices for decision making by grouping all protocols and then conducting analysis of the cumulative distribution of protocols would be unreliable due in large part to the imbalance of numbers of protocols brought on by these behaviours. Instead, each teacher or teaching couple has been analysed separately to better understand that individual case before continuing to analyze by comparisons across cases.

This study is guided by two research questions to support the creation of an explanation of how teachers make decisions to accept or reject job offers. These questions have slightly different roles in shaping this inquiry. The first question directs this research to focus on *what* teachers examine. The second question is concerned with *how* these factors are used to come to a final decision. Both *what* and *how* are important parts of understanding this phenomenon, but the nature of these questions are different. Likewise, the research examining these two ideas is also quite different. As reviewed in chapter two, theories describing what teachers examine in job searches are available most importantly in the work of Cox (2012). This research is primarily examining that question to determine if these factors are significantly changed when teachers are actually making these decisions. As question one is extending from established theory, the analysis procedures detailed by Chi (1997) will be used. Research question two guides this study into generating guidelines to assist international school leaders as they recruit teachers.

Analysis Process

Analysis allows the researcher to make meaning of data (Creswell, 2009). In this study the two questions guiding this research are different in their nature. These differences make it

necessary for slightly different analysis processes to be used here. Research question one, what factors of attraction matter to teachers, has established theory already identifying these factors and predicting behaviour (Cox, 2012). The current research serves to examine this theory more closely to the actual event that previously seen in the research. Fundamentally, this is a question of evaluating theory and as such it is well suited to the analysis methodology described by Chi (1997). The second research question is one that will be used to develop guidelines for future recruitment practice. While decision making is a well-established research field, there are no theories or research based practices that explicitly explain how teachers evaluate jobs and make decisions in this situation. Based on the available literature examined in chapter 2, I initially proposed a theoretical framework for teacher decision making informed by dual process theory (Evans, 2011); rational and rule based theory (March, 2004); elimination by aspect and satisficing (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000); and game theory and matching markets theory (Ramsey, 2008). As this frame is one that is untested, it was expected that the data might necessitate adjustments as the analysis progressed.

In order to generate recommendations for school leaders from the data, the methods suggested by Chi are used in this instance as well, though it becomes necessary to develop a coding scheme. For greater clarity on how to establish a coding scheme within the VPA methodology, the work of Simon and Ericsson (1993) is used to guide this process.

This data analysis approach is used as it provides a tested, explicit method to develop understanding and evaluate previous findings using VPA. Though Chi provides a sequence of steps that I examine below, she advises the researcher to frequently move back and forth

between these steps to better understand the data and allow for greater accuracy in interpretation (1997). This adaptive process is also advocated by Simon and Ericsson (1993).

The steps outlined by Chi used in this study are:

1. Transcribing and segmenting the protocols
2. Developing or choosing a coding scheme or formalism
3. Operationalizing evidence in the coded protocols that constitutes a mapping to some chosen coding system
4. Depicting the mapped formalism
5. Seeking pattern(s) in the mapped formalism
6. Interpreting the patterns (1997, p. 283).

Additionally, Chi proposes that data may have to be reduced or sampled. This step, as is common for many VPA studies has been omitted as this study will not generate so much data that it will need to be reduced or sampled.

Data Transcription and Segmentation

A total of twenty teachers participated in all stages of this study and have their interview data included in this final analysis. These interviews occurred on the same day that the participating teachers had received one or more job offers and before they had signed a contract or other documentation indicating acceptance of any offer. These interviews followed typical Verbal Protocol Analysis (VPA) methods where participants were simply asked to think through their problem, in this case choosing to accept or reject a job offer, while verbalizing their thoughts. The interviewer gave very few prompts and asked no direct questions of the

participants. These VPA interviews were conducted in the job fair hotels and recorded for transcription.

After the job fairs, the recorded interviews were transferred onto a single computer and deleted from the recording devices. The verbalizations were then transcribed. At two instances across all of the interviews, the exact word spoken by the participant is unclear. In these cases the transcription was simply marked as <unclear> for the unintelligible word or phrase. In neither of these instances does the unclear word make the overall sentence or utterance unclear. These transcriptions were then edited to remove identifying features such as individual or school names. This step was taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants and others mentioned in the interviews.

The transcripts were then segmented into protocols. In adherence to the analysis models presented by both Chi (1997) and Ericsson & Simon (1993). Chi advises to segment protocols to a sized based on the objective of the research. In this case as the current study is examining decision making, this segmentation was done such that each protocol contains one idea or factor of attraction. In most instances this was easy as subjects producing protocols typically pause after addressing a single new idea and this pause is an indicator to the researcher to start a new protocol (van Someren et al., 1994). In other cases, the teachers produced utterances that contained several distinct ideas or factors. These more complex statements were broken into separate protocols where a new factor or decision making approach was brought up.

For example, teacher P made the following statement without any clear pause:

“I just I feel like there’s some intangibles that I just can’t quite put my finger on, I know that salary is important to me, and I know I want to have a healthy personal life, but I don’t think that that is everything I need so I think what I’m trying to do is try to be in contact with teachers of these top two schools here tonight.”

In this situation, this single utterance would be segmented into three protocols:

- A. I just I feel like there’s some intangibles that I just can’t quite put my finger on, I know that salary is important to me
- B. and I know I want to have a healthy personal life
- C. but I don’t think that that’s everything I need so I think what I’m trying to do is try to be in contact with teachers of these top two schools here tonight

The first two of these phrases has a distinct factor that is influencing the decision making process, financial compensation package and personal well-being respectively, while the third segment demonstrates a decision making approach: research by communicating with teachers.

Coding for Research Question One

The third step of data analysis process was for these protocols to be coded. Qualitative studies use differing approaches to this task. Generally, these approaches to coding can be described as either following an established theoretical framework in order to test its validity or

suitability to that situation, or applying an inductive approach in order to develop new theories (Patton, 2001). VPA has been used effectively for both of these approaches (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Ericsson & Simon, 1987). In this study both approaches are used, one for either of the different questions under investigation.

The first research question, which factors of attraction are being attended to by teachers as they evaluated job offers, tests the theoretical framework established by Mancuso (2010) and Cox (2012). As such, codes are drawn directly from this established theoretical framework. These factors of attraction are 1) relationship with school leadership, 2) external work conditions, 3) professional satisfaction, 4) personal well-being, 5) professional growth, 6) financial compensation, and 7) wanderlust.

After the selection of the formalism, the next step in VPA analysis is to decide what utterances in the data constitute evidence of a certain code (Chi, 1997). This process is one that requires repeated rereading of the data and a willingness to accept that some codes will be ambiguous and may need to be removed from the data set (Chi, 1997). During the first iteration of coding, protocols gathered in this study were coded according to these numbers if they suggested that the teacher was using that factor to shape their decision to accept or reject the job offer under consideration. If a protocol was found not to contain any of these factors or if it was unclear, it was coded as 0.

Protocols that discussed additional factors that did not fit into those as suggested by Cox were noted and gathered for review at the end of the coding to decide if additional codes were needed to capture these factors.

Through this initial coding process it became clear that this formalism was suitable to apply. This decision was made due to the very low number of protocols that referred to factors of attraction not captured by these codes. Most of the protocols provided by teachers clearly fit into one of the categories of this formalism. However, several teachers commented about how they “wanted to go to a good school” or that one offer “was from a better school than another.” An example of this can be seen in the statements made by Teacher Q:

- a. I like talking with him... I think <school 1> is a better fit for what I want to do.
- b. But also, <school 2> has really good coaching opportunities, and I think that would be good for me.
- c. I don't know if that's really worth it, we'll see about that.
- d. This seems like a good school but I don't really know.

These four protocols were initially coded with a=1 (indicating an attention to school leadership), b=5 (professional growth), c=0 (unclear), and protocol d was labeled as this new ‘good school’ factor.

Upon close reading of both Cox (2012) and Mancuso (2010) it appears that this and related statements might fit into their second factor: ‘external work conditions’, but that title left uncertainty to this researcher. In Cox’s study, questions about levels of classroom resources, available facilities, and general work conditions are used as data for this factor (2012). It was decided that a more general description of this factor would be suitable to illustrate the overall desire that many teachers have to work at an excellent school. As such, this second factor has been renamed in this study to ‘school quality’. A recoding of the protocol listed above as well as other previously ambiguous protocols allowed all of these statements to

fit into this newly titled second factor. No other new factors were revealed by the participating teachers.

Table 1. Example Data for Question 1

Factor	Example(s) from interview data
Relationship with school leadership	<p>Teacher S: ...the director is really nice</p> <p>Teacher T: Well, the vice principal who interviewed me was so funny. I definitely like the school, I like the people in charge,</p>
School quality	<p>Teacher Re: I worked at some kind of shady schools, and I work at a good school now...</p> <p>I just don't want to go back to a shady school.</p> <p>Now I have to find out more about the school.</p>
Factor	Example(s) from interview data
Professional satisfaction	<p>Teacher P: And it is a grade four position, which is good, because some of the other schools only have grades two or three...I feel like I am better suited to grade four. I don't really want to work with the younger ones.</p>
Personal well-being	<p>Teacher Q: It's a lot of things I guess. This is a place I really want to live.</p>

	<p>Teacher R: Also, I think it would be an easier place to live for me, in Korea. It's is a really cool community I think.</p> <p>I can go the beach. I'd love to keep living that lifestyle.</p>
Professional growth	<p>Teacher J: Like the school we are at right now is not really the best and I think we need to get some experience at a better school before we go somewhere else. If we take this, I will get IB experience...</p>
Financial compensation	<p>Teacher Q: The fourth thing is their package is just amazing so... I've pretty well made my decision.</p>
Wanderlust	<p>Teacher H: I came in here putting location as my priority... As like, as stupid as that may seem to some people. That's my priority, I just wanted a complete change from Shanghai.</p> <p>Like either going to Europe, or South America.</p>

Coding for Research Question Two

As analysis of question two is also based on VPA methodology outlined by Chi (1997) and Ericsson and Simon (1993b). While setting codes for question two, the processes teachers used to come to their decisions, this researcher started with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. This framework, formed from combining several decision making theories applies dual process theory (Evans, 2011); rational and rule based theory (March, 2004); elimination by aspect and satisficing (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000); and game theory and matching markets theory (Ramsey, 2008). While considering this framework, I chose not to

adopt an established coding formalism, as those that I encountered in my research on this topic seem ill-suited for application to this situation. Instead, I adopted an intuitive approach, using what Henwood and Pidgeon call 'theoretical agnosticism' (2003). This approach encourages the researcher to be aware of the many theories that might guide the phenomena under study, but enter into the research without the expectation that any one may completely shape events. This process allows this research to use VPA methodology to develop a deep understanding of teachers' actions and motivations, and to use this understanding to offer guidelines for school leaders (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). Such an approach allows both for connecting the ideas shared to reveal information about established factors and theories, as well as for the data to reveal new formalisms. Past research has considered what factors shape teachers' job seeking decisions, but little established theory exists addressing the processes that teachers use to gather information about these factors or to ultimately evaluate them.

Initially open coding was used. This process proceeded through close reading of the data and through comparison of incidents both against other incidents as well as against the theoretical frame suggested earlier in this report. After several readings of the data combined with a broad understanding of the aspects shaping my decision making framework, I was able to identify themes presented by the participating teachers and establish codes for this data. These initially proposed codes were 1) researching, 2) elimination by aspect, 3) satisficing, 4) rational evaluation, and 5) intuitive evaluation. The data were then re-evaluated using these codes. It is through these codes that we can begin to see which factors are more frequently attended to and thus may bear the greatest weight upon decision making as teachers navigate

through this process and also the methods used by teachers to gather information and make decision.

After this initial coding, it became clear that the similarities in elimination by aspect and satisficing resulted in confusion as to when a teacher was using either one. A rereading of the research basis for these theories provided this researcher with the understanding that these decision making strategies are so similar that they could be suitably grouped in this study (Archibald et al., 2006; Tversky, 1972). It is also likely that most teachers that had used elimination by aspect had done so prior to applying for positions and this likely reduced its applicability at this stage in the recruiting process.

It was also found at this time that the *researching* code was too broad as several different methods of research were being used by teachers. It is important for this research to distinguish between these approaches. Therefore, 'researching' was divided into three sub-categories: (1) communication with teachers experienced with the school, (2) communication with administrators from the school, and (3) other research. Additionally, the issue of timing considerations frequently arose in the protocols and this was added as a distinct code. In many cases, teachers made frequent references to their concern for the amount of time they had to decide, planned efforts to extend the time to decide, or attempted to find better opportunities before they had to decide on a position before them. This issue of timing relates to the matching problem that these job seekers face (Ramsey, 2008). All of these instances made it important for this research to group these protocols to facilitate a better understanding of this behaviour.

Further examining these protocols revealed that not only could decision making and information gathering approaches be identified, but also the degree to which these approaches helped the teacher move closer to accepting or rejecting the job offer was distinct in many instances. For example, an individual who talked with current teachers at a job offering school may move much closer to accepting that job compared to a teacher that reflects on their feeling about a school who may not advance in the decision making process at all.

Final codes used for the second question are:

- 1) communicating with teachers currently at the school
- 2) communicating with school administrators
- 3) other research
- 4) intuitive evaluation
- 5) analytical evaluation
- 6) elimination by aspect/satisficing
- 7) consideration of timing

With the development of a new coding structure, it is important for any researcher to be explicit about what characteristics of the data would distinguish one coding category from another. Making the boundaries between codes explicit is helpful not only for the reader of any research but also for the researcher to avoid ambiguity.

Table 2. Codes Used for Research Question Two

Coding Category	Evidence looked for in the data to trigger this code
Communicating with teachers currently at the school	Protocols were coded here if they made reference to conversations or other communication that the teacher had or is planning to have with teachers at the job-offering school. This includes emails to current teachers or video or telephone conversations. This excludes viewing school promotional videos that often include teacher testimonials.
Communicating with school administrators	Protocols were coded here if they made reference to conversations or other communication that the teacher had or is planning to have with administrators at the job-offering school outside of the normal school driven recruitment process. This includes emails or conversations with school leaders to clarify details about the offer, the school, or the location. This excluded references to the interview.
Other research	Protocols were coded here if they made reference to gathering of new information beyond what was shared with the candidate in the normal recruiting process at the job fair. This research excludes speaking with teachers or administrators at the offering school (captured in other codes). This includes examining the job offering school’s website, speaking with the recruitment fair representative, web searches on the city. This excludes examining documentation provided by the school.

Coding Category	Evidence looked for in the data to trigger this code
Intuitive evaluation	<p>Protocols were coded here if they demonstrate intuitive understanding or assumptions made about the school or factors of the offer. In many instances this is inferences from the interview process (Kahneman, 2011). This includes statements like “the director is really nice” but excludes “I would love to go to China.”</p>
Analytical evaluation	<p>Protocols were coded here if they expressed a rational evaluation or comparison of elements of the position offered. This includes a teacher comparing schools across factors of attraction or trying to understand the complete benefit package of a school (Goode, 1997).</p>
Elimination by aspect /Satisficing	<p>Protocols were coded here if they demonstrate the teacher is eliminating a school based on the offer not meeting a decided threshold value across one or more identified factors of attraction (Tversky, 1972). This includes a teacher deciding that they need to make \$X and refusing to consider jobs that do not meet that level.</p>
Consideration of timing	<p>Protocols were coded here if they described concerns by the teacher about the deadline or plans to change this deadline (Ramsey, 2008). Protocols that examined if the teacher could get a better job by delaying acceptance of the offer also fit into this code. Examples include teachers considering if they should attend another job fair or just take the current offer.</p>

The second attempt at coding for the second research question using this formalism proved more effective at revealing themes for how teachers were making their decisions.

Table 3. Example Data For Question 2

Coding Category	Example from interview data
Communicating with teachers currently at the school	Teacher A: The first one, is with _ in Dubai, and I've been talking to some people about that school everyone says that it is okay, and I think I would be really happy in Dubai. I talked with one of the teachers at this school, and she says that it would be good.
Communicating with school administrators	Teacher P: So I guess I am going to sleep on it, and shoot off an email with a few more questions to the director. I have until tomorrow. I think that if he can clear up these issues I will probably take the job.
Other research	Teacher Q: I haven't signed up for ISR <a school review website> so maybe I should sign up for ISR just to see more about the schools. See what the dirt is.
Intuitive evaluation	Teacher S: Is this school going to be fun? Am I going to like it? Do I really like this guy? Do I want to work for him? All this stuff is racing through my head. This is real....I think I... yeah I mean I think I know the answer to it. But I don't think you are ever completely sure until you get there. And you start to experience it.
Coding Category	Example from interview data

Analytical evaluation	Teacher P: So I've made this table and what is done is I've ranked these three schools that I've interviewed with across a couple of domains. I haven't gotten offers from all three yet but I think that I will get the offers...
Elimination by aspect /Satisficing	Teacher R: We talked about certain countries we were able to rule out certain regions. Pretty much right away. This is our fourth year, so we knew that we were pretty much done with Africa. We were pretty much ruling out South America. So we already narrowed it down a lot before we came to the fair. I'm wanting to get out of a predominantly Muslim country. It's been great, but time for a change.
Consideration of timing	Teacher B: I think right now what I want to do is wait and see if I can get a second interview with the other school. So I think I'm going to talk with these guys and see if they can hold off till tomorrow.

Example of Coding of Teaching Couple N & E

Data gathered at Bangkok job fair during the second day. Recording started at 5:42 ended at 5:53.

Table 4. Data for Teachers N&E with Coding

Recorded Protocol	Coding for Question 1	Coding for Question 2
E- Why we may take it or why we might not? So its definite money that's better than going home and try to find a job in is a small school,	6	5
N-...diverse community...	4	5
still I can coach..	3	5
E- yes you can coach	3	5
it is a close community there...	4	5
N-Yeah, a close community, sounds like hanging out with other teachers is common there even though...	4	5
What is cool is that I do I never really thought about what he said about taking a <unclear> position about how that would look good in the future instead of..	5	5
E- yeah I think you could go either way	0	0
N-I don't think it would look bad but they are really open to changes if I wanted to which I really appreciated	0	4
and since compared to options like this ...it is our only definite option so far ha ha.	0	7
E- I would love to hear back from the Hong Kong school but they...	0	

Recorded Protocol	Coding for Question 1	Coding for Question 2
<p>N- the Sudan one sounds really interesting too, but really the only plus there is the MYP/PYP experience. But mine is still elementary PE anyway.</p>	5	5
<p>E- but you could have a tech elementary combo. We would have to look at that if.... We should talk to him.</p>	5	2
<p>what else</p>	0	0
<p>N- but Ethiopia I think it sounds cool. All the service stuff options, and I miss that. In their involvement with the embassies in the NGOs there and the opportunity to give back.</p>	3	4
<p>And the travel... lots of chances to travel from there better than anywhere else on the continent which would be very handy.</p>	7	5
<p>E-I imagine that if we spent money that would be where it would be,</p>	7	5
<p>but did they say that they would pay for half of your masters?</p>	6	5
<p>N- I don't think it's half but they pay a portion.</p>	6	5
<p>E- I think it's half.</p>	6	5
<p>N-Huh, I really will have to ask again I don't know I don't remember I think they pay half something about the University of New York. It's not college in New Jersey but it's a similar program I think it's not a certification but some masters you then have to take your praxis in the United States.</p>	6	5

Recorded Protocol	Coding for Question 1	Coding for Question 2
E-is that something you can get your certificate if you just went back and took a test	6	5
N-yeah, I think... I need to check it ...like I told you how my degree... like my degree is legit but it's not physically education it's really in exercise and fitness and so I need to just complete that ... I emailed my advisor she was unclear as to a test that I have to take.	6	0
E- oh okay	0	0
N-because I was going to, but then I get the Indian job and I just left and so then when I went to Dubai it is a little different... I will have to contact her,	0	0
but they sounded really supportive	1	4
E-and they want to help you to get that they will be supportive of that which is nice too,	2	4
and being in a smaller place like that we give us more downtime chance to do stuff outside of school.	4	4
I think would be a lot less stressful just being team leader right now and my classroom position running ... for sure less stressful.	3	4
He mentioned that the personalities on my team could...can be tough, one of them, but I've handled personalities before.	3	4

Recorded Protocol	Coding for Question 1	Coding for Question 2
N- It is funny how she mentioned that she mentioned Brenda or somebody yet...	0	0
E-Do they know that we are not married?	0	0
N- Yes I don't know if there's laws or not I just meant to ask but that I forgot to tell them.	0	0
E-I know... I think it was... they only asked if we have it any children,....	0	0
I think we should take it.	0	4
N- in that case we need to talk to school #2 people and school #3 and see if we can get offers from them before we decide...	0	7
We have till 6 PM tomorrow night yet...	0	7
I think it's fair just think it over to more tomorrow I guess look up more,	0	7
but I mean if it's just what we have now I think we should take it	0	4
E-Yet it's not... not that offer I think it's just that I really just look forward to be in a good school for both of us	2	5
N-and with them helping with my school and just that they just...	6	5
E- It would be cool to be in Africa.	7	4
N-OK, so lets go and talk to those other schools and see if they have offers.	0	7

Analysis

Initial attempts to analyze the data gathered here included efforts to combine the data to determine the most attended to factors of attraction for the group as a whole. These attempts were abandoned as the number of protocols produced by participants varied so greatly. One subject discussed issues of wanderlust repeatedly while few other participants mentioned this factor of attraction. Averaging the attention of this one individual across the group would not accurately represent the importance of that recruiting element. Instead, each teacher or teaching couple was viewed as a separate case and the analysis process proceeded trying to better answer the guiding questions on a case by case basis.

For question one, a basic count of coded protocols for each teacher or teaching couple was made. Based on this count, the primary and secondary factors attended to by teachers in making their decision was identified. These key factors identified by these cases were then compared to reveal the overall preferences of the participant group. In the example given earlier of teachers N and E, the most commonly attended to factor of attraction was financial compensation, and the second most attended to factor was professional satisfaction.

As a reliability check that this system of counting these protocol codes was accurate in identifying key factors, the researcher reread the non-segmented transcripts of each interview and attempted to intuitively identify the interviewee's primary and secondary decision factors. In all cases this counting method identified attended to factors that matched with the researcher's 'best guess opinion' of the primary and secondary motivating factors for that teacher or teaching couple.

For question two, it became clear that even on an individual level, counts of numbers of coded protocols are not suitable to identify methods of decision making used by teachers. The data revealed that many teachers moved through distinct phases in their decision making and primarily focussed on a single decision approach or style during each of these phases. Additionally, it is not clear from some of the segmented protocols what approach is being used, resulting in fewer overall coded protocols to evaluate and thus lowering the reliability of such an approach. Though a teacher might make a number of verbalizations about the quality of the school offering a job, it may be unclear if these thoughts indicate rational or intuitive decision making without looking at the process more holistically. This can also be seen in the data provided by N & E. This couple clearly started their decision making by attempting to gather evidence in support of accepting or rejecting the offer before them. This process revealed a reliance on analytical evaluation, but it is unclear if this process actually helped move them closer to making a decision. Instead, it was when they shifted their focus to their intuitive reactions to the offer and then thought of timing issues that they really seemed to move closer to accepting the job.

Chi (1997) encourages researchers to draw graphical depictions of the coded problem solving to better illustrate sequences and connections (1997, p. 298). Depictions promote the grouping of codes into clusters and allows for the demonstration of progression through patterns of understanding or behaviour (Chi, 1997). Through the task of drawing and redrawing these depictions three distinct decision processes were revealed.

The processes identified were: researching, evaluating, and planning. Communicating with teachers, communicating with administrators, and other research were grouped as the researching process. Intuitive evaluation, rational evaluation, and satisficing/elimination by aspect were grouped as the evaluating process, and protocols coded as timing were viewed to be part of the planning process.

In order to ensure reliability and to generate meaning from these categorical groups, the data was reread examining how the events may fit into these new categories. This recoding both into code and category helps to achieve validity and ensure the suitability of these groupings as well as facilitate interpretation (Chi, 1997).

Issues of Trustworthiness

In order to have value, research must have clearly defined standards of quality. Traditional positivist standards include validity and reliability. As this study comes from a postpositivist philosophical orientation, trustworthiness is a more suitable verification standard (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Phillips and Carr define trustworthiness as including “transparency of process; data gathered with and for a purpose; a deliberate stance of seeking multiple perspectives, including those found in literature; praxis and change in the researcher and in practice; and thus results that matter” (2009, p. 208). Other researchers site credibility, how closely aligned the data gathered is to the researcher’s interpretation of that data, as vital to the overall trustworthiness of any qualitative research effort (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

This study has been transparent through the clear communication with involved parties regarding the research process used as well as the intended purpose of this project. Communication with participants and the recruitment firms clearly defined how the data being gathered was to be used and the benefits that may come as a result in this research. Credibility is attained through the use of established research methods for both the gathering and analysis of data and the use of data gathering procedures that promote honest and accurate data (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

As this study involves human subjects as participants, several steps have been taken to ensure that it is conducted in as ethical a manner as possible. First, the researcher has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 – CORE) Tutorial related to ethical considerations in research (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics>). Second, the research plan was reviewed and approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

This study is shaped by the overarching guidelines suggested by the Belmont Report (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) to ensure respect, beneficence, and justice for all participants. Additionally, the research honours Brydon-Miller's (2008) call for researchers to consider the broader institutional, social and cultural impacts of their efforts.

Throughout the process, the data was kept secure. Interview recordings were initially stored on the researcher's phone, which was kept personally by this researcher and also

protected by a passcode lock. These recordings were then transferred onto the researchers secure computer after the job fair and deleted from the phone. The audio files, transcriptions, and any other data generated during this study have been password protected on a computer and back-up drive only accessible to this researcher.

Study Limitations

Limited Time of Observation

The value of the VPA methodology is that it captures cognition that would remain hidden to most other observation methods. However, social factors including discomfort from speaking with a silent observer can have an impact on the functioning of the primary task (van Someren et al., 1994). Subjects may fail to accurately describe their thinking aloud and reminders to observe the protocols of the study may create irritation or anxiety. Both of these emotional states may impact the level of detail in the thoughts and reports produced by the subject (Ericsson & Simon, 1987). By having participants verbalise while making decisions, factors and approaches can be revealed that might otherwise remain obscured and filtered using other approaches. Unfortunately for this study, the decision making process for teachers considering an international school job is one that lasts hours or days. This study made no attempt to have the teachers verbalise for such an extended period of time. It is doubtful that such an extended observation would be logistically or ethically feasible. Instead, the teachers examined here verbalised their decision making process over a short period of time while they were deciding to accept or reject one or more job offers. It is clear from the data that the teachers had progressed through some of their decision making processes by the time they sat

down with the researcher. It is likely that teachers would start sorting through their ideas about whether they should accept or reject an offer during their application process and then certainly once they were formally offered a position. Some of these participants had almost entirely decided to accept the job when I spoke to them, while others remained stuck in the uncertainty of the early stages of their process. While this study attempts to understand the decision making factors and approaches used by teachers, it is clear that these job seekers use different methods through the process and examining their thoughts during one small window of their decision making may not completely capture their thoughts.

Number of Participants

This study uses a close examination of teacher behaviour when considering job offers to develop guidance for international school leaders seeking to recruit teachers. This quest for understanding and guidance for school leaders is made despite evidence that international school teachers, like international schools themselves are incredibly diverse (Canterford, 2003). Perfect representation can never be made by a sample of any non-homogeneous group, and this study does not seek to be so broad in sample size as to be perfectly representative. Such a sampling procedure would be logistically difficult for an interview-based study. Instead, this study develops a deep understanding of the decision making of a smaller number of teachers. Steps were taken to create as representative a sample as possible. The biographical makeup of the teachers that participated here is close to that seen in the US as a whole (Feistritzer, 2011) and the sample used by Cox (2012).

Despite the value in developing understanding of the behaviours made by these 20 teachers, having the ability to work with a larger number of job seekers would have enriched

this research and provided greater strength to the trends observed in this data set.

Unfortunately, the limited time that teachers have to decide to accept or reject a job offer, and the costs associated with traveling to the international job fairs makes expanding this research difficult.

Participant Representation

Despite the acceptance stated above that this study does not strive to be entirely representational, any major deviations from the typical job seeking population should be identified and discussed. Selection bias is an issue for all studies that do not examine all members of the investigated population or use randomized sampling approaches, and this study is no different. The group that participated in this research were volunteers that attended one of the Search Associates job fairs in either Bangkok or Dubai during the spring of 2014. Both the location of the interviews, as well as the recruitment process into the study, certainly had an impact at causing study participants to differ in slight ways from the wider group of job seeking international teaching job applicants.

First, by conducting the study at job fairs in Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, almost all participants were already working as international teachers. This omitted the numerous teachers currently working in the US, UK, Canada, or elsewhere that may desire to enter the world of international teaching but would more likely attend a job fair in the US or the UK. It is possible that new international teachers have different concerns and decision making processes from those that are currently working in the field. The bias of the job fair location was exaggerated at the Dubai fair as that event is primarily used by candidates currently in the Middle East and by schools located in the Middle East and North Africa. It can

be assumed that teachers attending this fair had already made a key decision that they were willing to remain in the region. This may have suppressed that consideration from showing up in the decision making interviews as strongly as it may have otherwise.

Secondly, the nature of volunteering your time to speak to this researcher may have also shaped the group. Age might have been a factor, as it was found that participants were overwhelmingly in their 30s. This range matches the age of the researcher and may be due to a perceived comfort level with a peer. Also, despite special attention paid to encouraging couples to participate in this study, few were willing to participate during the time when they were actively deciding to accept or reject a job. Only three couples were included in the final data despite several showing initial interest. In many cases, couples went through the recruitment process for this study and expressed a strong interest in participating, but then only contacted this researcher at the job fair after having already signed a contract. While it is unclear why single teachers were so much more willing to participate, one possibility is that the availability of their spouse to talk through the decision making allowed couples to more confidently navigate through the decision making process. While many of the participants in this study were clearly struggling to make their decision and may have thought that participating in the interview process could help them with their choice.

Summary

This chapter details the methods used in this research, a qualitative study to explain how teachers evaluate jobs offered to them by international schools. Twenty teachers attending international job fairs in Bangkok, Thailand and Dubai, United Arab Emirates during

the spring of 2014 participated in think aloud VPA interviews. These interviews took place after they had received one or more job offers and before these teachers had made final decisions to accept or reject these opportunities. This data gathering technique was used as it allows to the thoughts of these teachers while they make this decision. Data gathered from these interviews was analyzed using VPA methodology outlined by Chi (1997) to reveal both what factors of attraction these teachers attended to and also what decision making processes they evaluated these offers.

Chapter 4: Findings/Evidence

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the decision making practices of international job seeking teachers, and to use this understanding to develop recruitment practices that will allow international school leaders to become more effective at attracting top teaching candidates to their schools. Two questions guided this study. First, what factors do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools? Second, what decision making processes do teachers use when choosing to accept or reject these offers?

The findings of this study are based on interviews using a verbal protocol analysis method. These interviews were conducted with a total of twenty job-seeking teachers including three teaching couples. These think aloud interviews were conducted at international teaching job fairs conducted by International School Services and Search Associates recruitment firms in Bangkok, Thailand and Dubai, United Arab Emirates during the spring of 2014. Teachers being interviewed had been offered one or more job offers from international schools at the time of the recorded interview and they were prompted to think aloud according to the verbal protocol assessment (VPA) methodology described in chapter three.

Participants

The biographical data of the participant group is detailed in table 3. For contextual comparison, this sample had a mean age almost five years younger than that used by Cox (2012), at 35.7 compared to 40.1 years. Undoubtedly associated with the younger age of this

group is their relative inexperience; the teacher participating in this study averaged 7.7 years of overall teaching experience and 3.75 years of international teaching experience. This is noticeably less than the 13.0 years of total experience and 7.2 years overseas for the teachers' samples by Cox (2012). Female representation in this study is 70% of participants compared to 59% in Cox (2012). It is difficult to make explicit comparisons against international teachers as a whole as firm data on this larger group is difficult to come by due to the shifting and nebulous nature of international schools. When compared to American teachers as a whole both of these studies show an underrepresentation of female teachers with the American domestic norm being 74% (Feistritzer, 2011). The median age and experience levels for domestic American teachers falls between those present in this study and the participants group used by Cox (Feistritzer, 2011).

Ensuring reliable representation of the greater pool of international teacher candidates is impossible within a study such as this. As noted earlier, this research generated data from a small group (n=20) of volunteers. To gain greater trustworthiness it is important that this group resembles the larger of teachers to as great a degree as possible (Creswell, 2009). It is therefore reassuring to see that these demographics are so close to those present in Cox's larger sample.

Table 5: Participant Biographical Data

Total Participants	20
Gender	Males = 6 Females = 14
Age	Range = 27-54 Mean = 35.7
Years of Teaching Experience Overall	Range = 2-27 Mean = 7.7
Years of Teaching Experience Internationally	Range = 0-14 Mean = 3.75
Couple/Non-couple status	Part of a Teaching Couple = 6 Married with non-teaching spouse = 2 Single = 12

Discussion of Results for Question #1

Question 1: What factors of attraction do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

The data suggest that four of the seven factors of attraction examined here are of key importance to teachers when deciding to accept or reject job offers from international schools: personal well-being, financial compensation package, professional growth opportunities, and

school quality. These factors were both attended to frequently, and also valued highly by teachers as they made their decisions.

The other examined factors of professional satisfaction, relationship with school leadership, and wanderlust, were also considered by the teachers under study, but far less frequently overall, and rarely were these factors critical in the decision making of the job seeking teachers as Figure 5 shows.

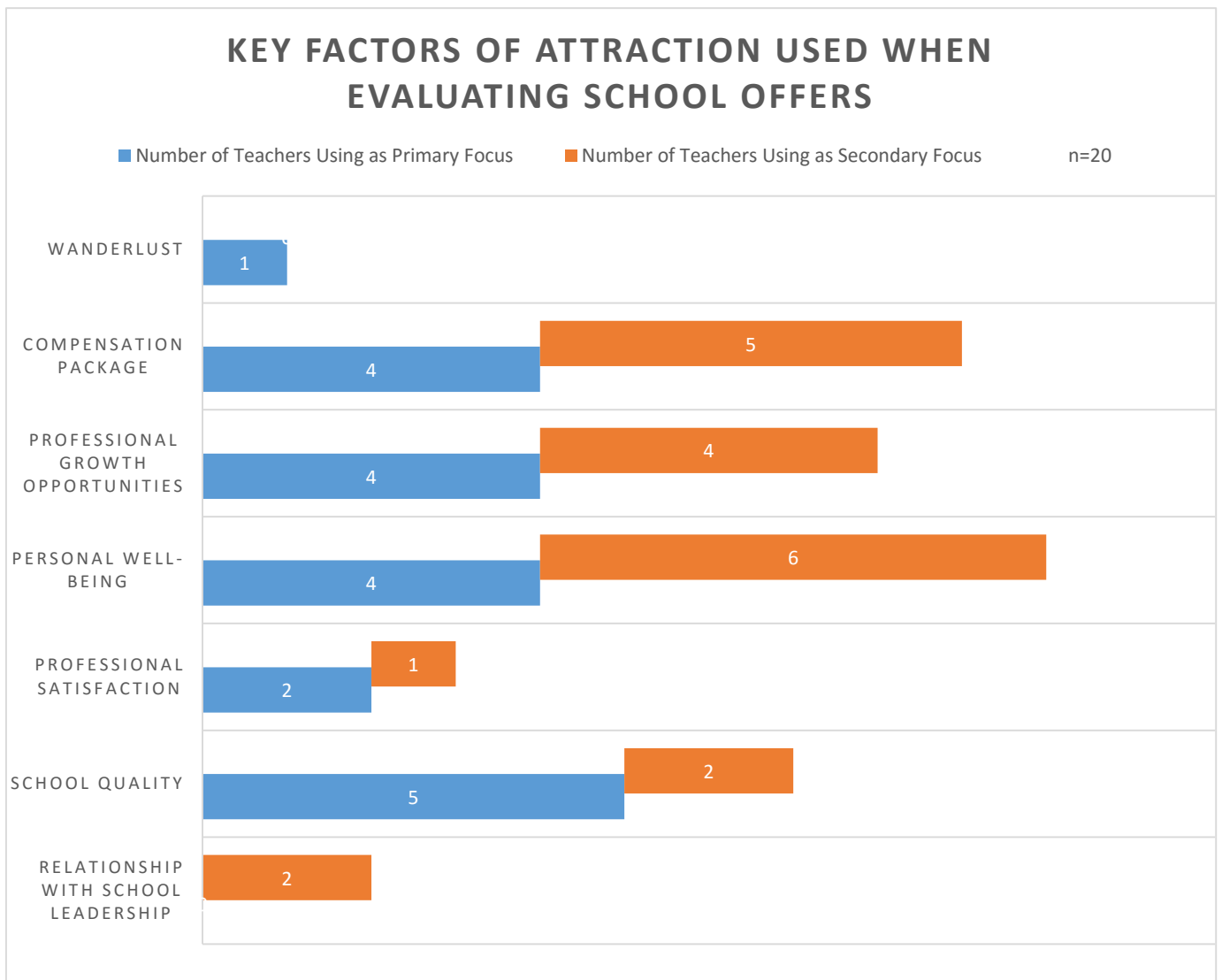


Figure 5: Key Factors Used by Teachers When Evaluating School Employment Offers

Factors of Attraction Considered by Teachers

In examining what elements of a job offer teachers gave most of their attention to, slightly modified factors of attraction presented in research by Mancuso (2010) and Cox (2012) are used to categorize the findings of this data. Those factors are: 1) relationship with school leadership, 2) school quality, 3) professional satisfaction, 4) personal well-being, 5) professional growth, 6) financial compensation, and 7) wanderlust. Each of these factors of attraction was attended to in some degree by the participants in this study. What follows here is a detailed examination of how the teachers related with each of the identified factors and how these factors may have influenced their decision to accept or reject the job offer under consideration.

Personal Well-being

Considerations of the teacher or teaching couple's potential safety, social inclusion, and general happiness were key to many in this study. Ten of the participants attended most or second most to this factor of attraction during their decision making. Even for those teachers that did not make this one of their top two decision making considerations, they all still spent time on this factor at some point in their decision to accept or reject a job offer.

Understandably, teachers want to know that they can be happy if they take the job on offer. An example of a teacher using this factor can be seen in F who states:

Also, I think it would be an easier place to live for me, in Korea. This school is a really cool community I think. I can go the beach. I'd love to keep living that lifestyle.

Frequently, teachers leaning toward accepting a job offer commented during the VPA interviews that they 'thought that they could be happy' at the school they were considering. It is clear that for most of these teachers this evaluation of their potential happiness was made mostly intuitively rather than through a more measured calculation. Exceptions to this intuitive approach could be seen in the practice of discussing the potential lifestyle with current teachers at the school.

In addition to general happiness, teachers touched on this factor when they attempted to make assessments of personal safety and well-being in the destination city. Key considerations for many teachers included perceived levels of crime, air pollution, and political stability in the destination that they were considering. In the current international school job market, where many of the vacant positions are for schools in the Middle East-North Africa region or in China, these concerns are perhaps made more salient than if more jobs were available in Europe or other regions. Somewhat surprisingly, most teachers made assessments of these sub-factors intuitively with little to no research or analytical research evident to this researcher. Schools may benefit from ensuring that misconceptions held by teachers, assuming that a particular location is less safe or accepting for example, are dealt with during the recruitment process. As a teacher that has lived in both China and the Middle East, I know that many job seeking teachers reject offers from schools in these areas based on perceptions of risk or difficulty that are in my opinion grossly overstated. Currently, many schools do attempt to amend these ideas held by teacher candidates. Greater attention to accurate descriptions of these locations may help to adjust their perceptions of these huge international school markets and improve recruitment performances for these locations.

Schools currently make efforts to include favourable descriptions of social activities available in their community. Several teachers examined here referred to these efforts while making their decisions and this appears to have helped them move closer to accepting offers from those schools. Teachers understandably want to have opportunities to fit into a fulfilling social life, and schools should continue their promotion of these aspects of their school community.

Financial Compensation

Many teachers spoke bluntly about the importance of financial compensation when evaluating job offers. Four of the twenty study participants considered this factor of attraction above all others, while another four teachers considered salary and related benefits as their second most important factor. The protocols gathered suggest that small differences between school salary packages were often ignored, but when teachers found themselves considering schools with more noticeable gaps the teachers frequently attended to thoughts of how difficult it would be to turn down the better paying offer. Additionally, teachers that were leaving well compensated positions also displayed an unwillingness to accept positions for much less than they were currently earning. Both of these feelings reflect loss aversion, a well-documented decision making bias (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Kahneman, 2011).

Financial compensation is a unique factor of attraction in this context as it is one of the easiest for candidates to evaluate as salary and related benefits are quantified in contract offers and other job fair material. Teachers seeking to compare what one school is offering them compared to another in financial terms have little difficulty in doing so. This known value is obscured somewhat by the variable costs of living in different markets, but it remains fairly

transparent especially when compared to the other factors of attraction under consideration in this research that are all far more difficult to assess and quantify. It is possible that the relative objectivity of this factor makes it easier to compare and this encouraged teachers to focus on this factor more than on another more undefined factor.

Many schools that have difficulty recruiting top teachers face budgetary constraints that limit their ability to raise salaries to compete directly on this factor. Those that do not have this limitation would likely do well by ensuring that they are at least competitive with other similar schools in their region. Teachers accept that there is variation in earnings depending on what part of the world the school is in, but a school in China paying considerably less than other schools in that same country will understandably have fewer teachers willing to accept jobs at what might be a great school.

Professional Growth Opportunities

The teachers in this study regularly considered opportunities for professional improvement and advancement when considering job offers. Four of the participants in this study used this consideration as their primary decision making factor, with another four teachers using this factor second most frequently. Opportunities to teach in schools utilizing the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum was the most frequently mentioned opportunity mentioned by teachers. Those teachers that provided information on why experience in an IB curriculum position was important for them described this experience as one that would allow them access to a greater selection of schools and positions in the future.

In addition to opportunities to participate in the IB or other new curricula, teachers also attended to general professional development opportunities offered by schools or desired by

the teacher candidates. An example of the importance placed on this factor can be seen in the thoughts of teacher F showed hesitancy to accept an offer because of the school's resistance to supporting external professional development activities compared to other schools:

The other schools that I'm still waiting on I think are better because they had better professional developments and at my age I think that's really important.

The one school said that if you work for us we will send you to this training or this other training and that sounds to me like a better match for my professional attitude and the things I want to do with my career.

This factor of attraction was unusual in that it was a key consideration for eight of the twenty teachers participating here, but went largely unmentioned by the rest of the teachers. Much of the information about what a school provides in factor, such as curriculum taught and professional development allowance given, is unambiguous. As such it can be communicated easily. All schools at these job fairs are required to the basics of their curriculum and PD allowance listed on job postings. Schools that have exceptional opportunities would do well to highlight these facts to candidates. This area is also one that may have high versus cost reward payoff for schools. Increasing a school's professional development budget for each teacher to a level where the school stands out as exceptional would certainly be much more easily done than increasing actual salary to achieve the same effect. That is to say that a school that offers \$2000 dollars a year for PD may stand out to candidates when most schools offer \$500-\$1500. Increasing overall salaries by \$1000 would likely not have the same level of impact at a similar cost to the school (as not all teachers use PD allowances each year). This money would also likely have the effect of increasing teacher quality as they spend this development allowance.

School Quality

School quality presents as one of the key evaluatory factors used by many of the teachers in this study. More teachers, five out of the twenty, used this factor as their primary consideration than any other, with two additional teachers using this as their secondary decision factor. Most comments made by teachers about this factor used the term 'good school'. For example, L stated that his offer had come from "a good school, but I am still hoping... hoping to get an offer from 'X' school ...it is an even better school I think."

Despite the high value placed on this factor, few teachers specified what details led them to perceive one school as being better than another. It appears that much of the assessment of school quality was made intuitively by these teachers after reviewing available sources of information such as the school's website, any literature presented during the interview, and data posted on the recruiting fair database. It can be inferred from some comments that there was a demonstrated preference for schools being established, with teachers showing hesitancy to commit to new schools. Likewise, despite some teachers specifically seeking out small schools, larger schools were valued more highly by most of the teachers in this study. It is possible however that both history and size are serving as proxies for other preferences such as teachers having heard more about a school, something that is likely true of larger and older schools. This effect of decision makers placing a higher value on a better known choice while placing a lesser value on a less know has been demonstrated previously in the decision making research (Ben-Haim, 2006; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; March, 2004).

In addition to the intuitive assessments made about school quality, some teachers also attempted to make more analytical assessments of this factor as well. As objective data about the school quality is difficult to access for most candidates, this approach was clearly the most impactful on the decision making process when the candidates were able to hear the experiences of current or former teachers at the school in question. Teachers that had a conversation about the job-offering school with a teacher currently working at that school accepted the opinions shared by that current employee without question and used this assessment of the school's quality to a great extent in their decision making process. There is no evidence collected in this study that suggests that other analytical sources of data about school quality, such as standardized test scores or teacher retention levels, contributed to these teachers' decision making processes.

Schools benefit from efforts to improve their perceived quality through presenting professional looking school websites, publications, and teacher recruitment videos or other media. Additionally, schools that provided applicant teachers easy access to communicate with currently employed teachers were also viewed more positively in this and other factors and thus increased their chances of having job offers accepted.

Professional Satisfaction

Evidence in this study does not suggest that many teachers make this factor a key part of their decision making. Only three of the twenty participants in this study used this as a primary or secondary approach. While this did not preclude teachers from touching on this issue during their decision making, it rarely proved to be a vital part of their considerations. Involvement with professional activities beyond the schools themselves, such as local

humanitarian efforts and student week without walls experiences were mentioned by several teachers as a positive factor in considering a contract offer. Additionally, diversity of both the student populations, as well as broadly based curricular offerings, were also considered positive factors by teachers.

Once again, it is unknown if teachers had already eliminated schools that did not provide suitable levels of professional satisfaction prior to applying for positions or after attending interviews with those schools. As well, this factor is a difficult one to measure for the teachers during the job fair experience.

Relationship with School Leadership

None of the teachers in this study used their relationship with school leadership as their primary decision making factor, and only two of the twenty teachers used this as their second most important factor when evaluating the job offer or offers before them. This finding appears to conflict with other research that suggests that in surveys taken before or after job fairs, teachers state that this relationship is an important consideration for them in evaluating job opportunities (Cox, 2012).

A potential reason for the lack of attention paid to this factor could be the difficulty that candidates have evaluating the relationship that one has or might have with school administration during the few interactions they have during the recruitment period. The brevity of the interviews or other contacts makes any evaluation of this potential relationship a tenuous one at best. It is possible that this difficulty contributed to making this factor show up so seldom in the considerations of the job seeking teachers. Two of the participants in this

study did not attend to this factor of attraction at all during the time with this researcher while seven others mentioned school leadership in fewer than 10% of their overall protocols.

Those teachers that did mention this factor made statements suggesting two main ideas. The first was to evaluate the level of trust that they felt about school leadership. That can be seen in comments such as when teacher L stated “I feel like I can really trust the director,” and when teacher B reported “I don’t know if I really trust them.” In both of these cases, the teachers had made tentative assessments of the level of trust that they felt toward the school’s leadership without any verbalised evidence that they had made analytical examinations to arrive at these feelings. Further research may be required to uncover how and why these teachers arrived at these important decisions about the trustworthiness of the school leadership. Despite this uncertainty as to how and why teachers made these judgements, it is clear in this data that these assessments show a direct relationship how the teacher views the school in general and in turn, this impression appeared to be closely connected to the teacher’s likelihood of accepting the position. In the case of B, quoted above, she ended her VPA interview leaning strongly against taking the job after having discussed her uncertainty with both the director and with the value of the school as a whole. Conversely, L, who expressed his trust with the director, was overwhelmingly positive about other parts of the job offer as well. He ended the interview planning to accept the contract.

The second way that relationship with leadership came up in the data was for teachers to address the general warmth and friendliness they felt during the interview process. Comments evaluating this factor centred on issues of comfort and congeniality more than leadership styles or other issues. One example can be seen teacher MC who opened interview

beaming about how the director was a “really nice and cool guy.” This same teacher had also very positive comments to make about the school as a whole that seemed to mirror this positive relationship that was forming with the director. While it is impossible to say if this social comfort directly influenced the way that this teacher viewed the school as a whole or if these were coincidental outcomes, research on the affect heuristic is well documented in the decision making literature (Gigerenzer, 2008; Slovic et al., 2007). This heuristic is one that allows people to transfer positive feelings that people have about an individual onto products or services offered or otherwise connected to that person. The level of usage of this approach seems to be limited in this group. None of the recorded statements about this factor were obviously negative. It is possible that teachers that had concerns about this factor had eliminated those schools from their consideration prior to the data gathering interview.

While it is certainly valuable for school representatives to present themselves in a way that would increase the likelihood of a candidate to connect or relate to them, this approach did not significantly impact the decision making of the teachers in this study.

Wanderlust

Almost none of the teachers examined in this research expressed high degrees of wanderlust. While several teachers briefly touched on the excitement of their new potential home, only one teacher used this factor as a primary consideration and none of the teachers used this as a secondary consideration. This single teacher made it very clear that her primary consideration was with getting a job in an exciting location. This factor was so important to her that she turned down an otherwise excellent offer from a top school because it was in East Asia, where she was working at the time.

“I like the job they offered me, which would be doing some special stuff and middle school there some good opportunities to do more than just teaching math.

But, I came in here putting location as my priority...

As like, as stupid as that may seem to some people. That’s my priority, I just wanted a complete change from Shanghai.

Like either going to Europe, or South America.

I know I’m limiting my options, I fully understand that. But, that’s kind of where I am at right now.” - Teacher H

Beyond this single participant, other teachers seldom mentioned the desire to travel or the excitement that they had with the location of schools offering contracts. No other teacher made statements linked with wanderlust for more than 10% of their overall protocols.

Schools have long used the excitement and interest that might exist around their location as a recruiting tool (Chandler, 2011). While it is possible that this study is underrepresented in the number of candidates that consider wanderlust, it appears at this time that these locations focussed appeals are may be wasted efforts.

Results for Question #2

Question #2: What processes do teachers use when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Teachers observed in this study used a variety of decision making approaches. Three key aspects of this process stand out in the data:

1. All teachers used both rational and intuitive evaluation approaches to better understand the value of the offer or offers
2. Teachers that used researching techniques to gather more information about the school or community had higher confidence in their understanding of the offer and were more inclined to accept
3. Most teachers wanted to end the job search process despite the potential of more desirable jobs if they rejected the current job and waited

The data reveal a disconnection between the frequency that a particular approach is used by teachers considering an offer and the effectiveness of an approach at moving that teacher closer to accepting or rejecting the job.

The data gathered here reveal the importance of teachers developing both an understanding of the job offer as well as confidence in that understanding. After receiving an offer, the teachers entered these decisions with some understanding of the school based on the contract, other school provided material, and conversations with the school leader. Both analytical and intuitive evaluation approaches were used in advancing these assessments, with all teachers starting their decision making process by trying to 'figure out' if an offer made sense for them. Teachers demonstrated alternation between these two related approaches with all teachers using aspects of both rational and intuitive evaluation. Neither approach was demonstrated to be more important for teachers in this study. Many teachers evaluated offers using solely this information and relying on both rational and intuitive decision making

approaches. Only occasionally did this evaluation of the offer and the teacher's existing understanding of the school alone prove to be enough to bring the teacher to a decision. Teachers that attempted to evaluate offers simply on the basis of the information and impressions gathered through the interview process often maintained high levels of unease and distrust toward the school and had difficulty committing to the contracts.

For the teachers observed here, it was only when their analysis was combined with gathering new information about the school that these participants gained confidence in their ideas about the value of the offer. This increased confidence advanced allowed for progression toward making a decision.

Other researching and information gathering approaches, though used less frequently, proved much more important at helping a teacher choose to accept or reject the job offer. Foremost of these approaches was communicating with teachers that have experience with the school offering the contract. Teachers that used this approach felt more confident in their assessments of the offering school's quality and their potential quality of life if they took the job on offer. As such, this approach regularly helped teachers feel comfortable enough to move towards accepting the job. Almost all of the teachers in this study that talked to a teacher currently at the job offering school moved significantly closer to accepting the position after that communication. This shift was as a result of greater levels of confidence in the previous positive assumptions made about their potential personal well-being and school quality of the offering organization.

Timing considerations were also revealed to be vital in shaping teachers decision behaviours. Teachers frequently expressed a great sense of relief to have received a job even if

that job was from a less desirable school than they had hoped for coming into the fair. Many teachers made plans to try to elicit better offers from competing schools prior to signing the one that they had before them. However, due to the significant amounts of time, money, and effort required to continue a job search beyond the job fair contributed to these teachers showing a preference toward accepting the first job offered if it was not possible to generate a more attractive offer while at that event.

Table 6: Results for Question #2

Decision Approach	Frequency of Use Number of teachers using this approach	Importance at Advancing the Decision Making Process
Communicating with Teachers Currently at the School	Moderate – 7	High
Communicating with School Administrators	Low - 2	Moderate
Other Research	Moderate – 8	Low
Intuitive Evaluation	High – 20	Moderate
Rational Evaluation	High – 20	Moderate
Elimination by Aspect /Satisficing	Low – 2	Moderate
Timing	High - 17	High

Decision Approaches Used by Teachers

Researching

Gathering additional information about the school after receiving a job offer was an incredibly helpful step toward making an ultimate decision for most teachers. The teachers observed in this study took several different steps to gain more information about the schools with at the job fairs. As such, codes for this approach were subdivided into three distinct sub-categories: a) communicating with teachers that have experience working in that country, city or school; b) communicating with school administrators; and c) other forms of research.

Communicating with Teachers Currently at the School

Most effective of the approaches at advancing a teacher or teaching couple towards a decision was communicating with current teachers at that school. This communication appeared to be evenly split between face-to-face conversations with other teachers at the job fair, and emails or video calls with teachers that were not present at the fair. This study does not reveal what types of questions that the decision making teachers were asking of their peers, but the results of those communications can be observed in this research. In almost all cases, there was a high degree of trust placed in the results of this research, and all of these communications resulted in teachers improving their view of school quality and/or their personal; well-being expected in that job and location. After talking to teachers currently at the offering school, job seeking teachers felt that they could “imagine themselves being happy at

that school.” It is unclear why this source of information is so powerful. It may be because it alleviates some of the uncertainty that surrounds most international job offers. It is understandably stressful accepting a job offer at a school and location that you know very little about. While most school leaders are well-meaning, job seeking teachers understandably demonstrate some hesitation in accepting a school leader’s descriptions about the job and location completely. In light of the need for these school leaders to fill their vacant positions, many are viewed as overselling how wonderful things will be for the teacher if they accept the job on offer. Talking with a peer that is less motivated to convince the teacher to accept the offer allows for a more even-handed description of the good as well as the bad parts of the job. Even hearing negative aspects of a position may be reassuring, as this will remove some of the uncertainty while few international teachers shy away from mild hardships.

Communicating with School Administrators

A less frequently used approach to gather additional information was to ask additional questions of the school director or other administration officials. Schools observed in this study conducted between one and three 20-30 minute interviews with a candidate before offering a contract. It is likely that only a small part of this limited time was spent describing the school or the lifestyle that teachers might have if they choose to work in that location. In addition to interviews, many schools give brief presentations at the start of the job fairs to groups of teachers that attempts to provide positive information about their school and increase the numbers of applicants for their positions. Even if a teacher has attended this type of presentation and gone through a typical number of interviews, their overall knowledge of the school and location at the time of decision making is very limited. As stated earlier, many

teachers expressed high levels of uncertainty about school quality and potential lifestyle while trying to evaluate contract offers.

Despite this limited knowledge and feelings of uncertainty, teachers showed an unwillingness to ask clarifying questions of school officials. This result stands out as peculiar in light of the importance that these teachers place on the limited information that they take from directors and others. The few teachers participating in this study that did communicate with school officials further did so by calling them or emailing in the evening while they were considering a job offer from that school. These teachers placed high levels of trust and importance on the additional information, and used it to move closer to a decision.

Other Research

Other researching approaches demonstrated by teachers in this study included reviewing the offering school's website, examining other online information about the school and location, and talking with the teacher's recruitment consultant. Most commonly used of these approaches was viewing the school website. Many of the teachers in this study reflected on information gathered from the website and the research data suggest that most if not all of the teachers used this approach to varying degrees. Despite the frequency that this approach was used, the data suggest that few teachers moved closer to making a decision based on this step. This may be due to the limited depth of information that many schools post on their websites that teachers might actually consider. It is unlikely that one can get a good idea of what it would be like to live and teach in a community based on the information shared on a typical website.

Several teachers consulted, or made plans to consult additional internet-based information. In some cases this additional information was travel or expatriate sites for the location of the school. For at least one candidate in this study this meant looking at International School Review (ISR) a website that allows teachers to record their experiences with an international school or an international school director. The mere mention of this site is enough to upset many directors, who feel that this platform elevates the anonymous rants of a few malcontents while suppressing the feelings of the quiet minority of teachers. Whatever the value and accuracy of this site, it appears to have been used infrequently by the teachers in this study.

The final significant avenue of teachers gathering additional information about the offers before them was through consultation with their recruitment advisor. The hosting agency for the job fairs where this research was conducted, Search Associates, provides consultation services for teachers. These consultants, often former international school leaders themselves, are very knowledgeable about the schools at their fairs and the overall field of international teaching. They make themselves available in person or by phone and email throughout the hiring fair to support and guide job seeking teachers. While only a few of the teachers in this study made use of this resource, those that did placed a high value on the additional information and opinion shared by their consultant, and used this to move closer to a decision.

Rational Evaluation

Nearly all of the teachers began their decision making process with a rational evaluation of the offer or offers before them. This initial approach most often centered on two factors

from question one: financial compensation, and school quality. These factors of attraction are highly important to the teachers so starting with this consideration is not surprising. The preference for rational evaluation to be used to better understand financial compensation seems appropriate as they are well suitable for this form of analysis. That factor of attraction is a mostly quantifiable factor and information on is readily available to the teachers in their contract and easily understood. Teacher evaluations of the financial compensation in most cases consisted of adding salary and other benefits together and the drawing of comparisons between this figure and other positions or their current employment.

It is more surprising to see teachers evaluating school quality with a rational evaluation approach as it is a more difficult factor to quantify. In the initial stages of their evaluations, teachers relied on school reputations and information gathered from the school's website or other sources to determine if the overall quality of the offering school.

As the decision making process progressed, other factors of attraction were examined using rational evaluation. Professional growth opportunities in particular were most often assessed using this method. In most instances however, teachers found that despite attempts to use this approach, they had an inability to use rational evaluation to determine their relative well-being if they accepted or rejected a position. Rational evaluation alone seemed unable to advance teachers to a decision. Even the teacher with the most rational approach, P, who made a table and numerically ranked schools across a number of factors, quickly found that there are intangibles that are not easily consciously understood and measured. Teachers typically persisted with this approach for a short time, and then shifted their decision making to a

different process, often intuitive evaluation, without having noticeably moved much closer to an ultimate decision.

Despite the inability for these teachers to analytically think their way to a decision using this approach alone, the fact that almost all participants in this study started here is important. Determinations made using this decision making approach are likely to persist throughout the rest of the process and shape the ultimate decisions. The data suggest that evaluations made using this approach combine with and are supported by other approaches to produce the final decision.

Intuitive Evaluation

All teachers in this study demonstrated some use of intuitive evaluation. Frequently teachers attended to how one school “felt right” or about how they were more excited by one offer than another. Both of these types of thoughts represent intuitive evaluation of job opportunities. Much like rational evaluation, intuitive evaluation was a key stage in the decision making, usually happening early in the process. All teachers spent at least some time ‘feeling’ about the job offer or offers that they were considering. This typically took place after the use of an analytical approach. Teachers would start with rational evaluation and then shift to intuitive assessment as they failed to reach a definitive decision using an analytical approach alone.

After having accessed their intuitive feelings about the offer, teachers would often return to analytical approaches. This cycle of analytical to intuitive, and then back to analytical, continued for several iterations for some of the participating teachers.

Teacher P's thoughts demonstrate this frequent transitioning back and forth between rational and intuitive:

I figured out is that #1 school has the highest score but I don't think I'm necessarily going to just go with that school just because they score the highest.

It's kind of made me realize I'm less interested in school #3 but even though #1 scores higher than #2, I think I might still go ...I just I feel like there's some intangibles that I just can't quite put my finger on...I know that salary is important to me and I know I want to have a healthy personal life but I don't think that that's everything I need ...so I think what I'm trying to do is try this being contact with teachers of these top two schools here tonight

The factors that were most often evaluated using intuitive evaluation were personal well-being, school quality, and relationship with school leaders. As could be expected, these factors are more difficult to evaluate analytically and allow more room for the teachers to utilise an intuitive approach. After making intuitive assessments, teachers would then see if this new information would allow them to more clearly evaluate an offer analytically.

Elimination by Aspect/Satisficing

Only a few teachers demonstrated use of an elimination by aspect approach to refine their job search and ultimately guide them to decisions. An example of this can be observed in C & R who stated:

R-...Vietnam, really moved up our list when we visited there.

C-But like China, seeing all the pollution, ruled that out of our list
which made things a lot easier as there are so many schools from that region.

As we can see in this case, and as was common for most teachers using this approach, elimination is paired with a rational evaluation. In this instance the couple's desire to live in less polluted location drives them to eliminate all schools in China.

While elimination was not one of the most commonly displayed approaches in these interviews that may be due to the stage of the decision making process that is under investigation here. By the time that these teachers had received job offers from schools, they had already decided which of the many schools they wanted to ask for interviews with and also which interviews to accept. It is likely that elimination factored more into those decisions than the ultimate choice to accept or reject the job offers as studied here. It is likely different factors as well as decision processes that get a teacher into an interview versus those that lead to the ultimate acceptance of a job (Cox, 2012). As a tool for assisting a teacher in making the final decision to accept or reject a job offer once it has been made, elimination by aspects seems to be used very infrequently.

Satisficing, like decision by elimination is an approach that is paired with either rational or intuitive evaluation. As discussed in chapter two, satisficing is the decision approach that has teachers ensuring that a school meets at least a certain threshold level in one or more categories of importance to them. Very few of the teachers displayed this approach during this study. Those that did expressed that a factor was good enough to move forward to evaluate other factors more closely. The factors of attraction most frequently assessed using a satisficing approach were salary and compensation, and professional satisfaction. For these factors, some

teachers had a threshold level that they were seeking, such as not taking reduction from their current pay level, but after meeting that level they shifted their focus to other factors to evaluate the offering school.

Timing

Issues of timing were attended to by 17 of the 20 teachers participating in this study. As these teachers neared their decision to accept a job offer, many of them hoped for better opportunities from other schools at the job fair. This attention to the potential for other offers prompted many teachers to plan to either ask the offering school to extend the deadline for a decision on the offer, or for to contact other schools and try to negotiate an offer before they had to accept the contract before them. This behaviour can be seen in O as she plans to contact another school that may be a better fit for her before the deadline to accept or reject her current offer ends:

My only reservation would be that I do have a second favourite school which I only learned about at this fair ...and I had a really good interview with them and they could offer one thing that this other school can't offer this moment and that's IB training.... I should really go see the director there...check to see if he can offer me a contract tonight.

An additional effect that timing had on the processes used by these teachers was to force them closer to a decision as they neared the deadline to do so. In several cases, teachers suggested that they were still unsure about what they really thought about a job offer, but they

moved toward making a decision one way or the other purely because they had the deadline approaching them. In this way, time was the most effective tool at advancing teachers to a decision.

A final consideration for the impact that time had on the decision making of these teachers is cost of the continuing the decision making process. On a micro level, this could be seen in the fatigue that teachers expressed from evaluating an offer after a long day of interviews. Several teachers admitted to being exhausted and had an increased willingness to take the job offer just to be done with the process. This desire to end the job search process was a factor on a macro level as well. Teachers that had a marginal offer to evaluate often wondered if they could get a better position by rejecting this offer and attending another job fair or conducting other search activities. In these cases, these teachers were very hesitant to reject the present job, as this would force them to spend more time, energy, and money on an extended job search or perhaps attending another job fair. An example of this can be seen in teacher RE who, despite being very unconvinced about the value of the job that she was considering stated:

“it’s really hard to say no to this offer in case I don’t get anything else.

I’m really stressed ...I don’t want to leave this here without a job.”

Analysis Decisions

In order to examine and draw meaningful conclusions from this data several decisions were needed on the part of this researcher. Those decisions will be discussed here as well as a brief examination of how those decisions shaped the findings of this study. These decisions were made in order for this study to be able to produce theoretical guidance for school leaders. As noted in Chapter 2, this study adopts the conceptual framework of considering labour market perspective, that teachers may rationally seek to optimize their decisions (Baker-Doyle, 2010); behavioural economics theory, that teachers make intuitive decisions through the use of bias and heuristics (Thaler, 2015); and the applicant attraction model which suggest that how school leaders recruit teachers impacts their overall success in this endeavor (Rynes & Barber, 1990).

For research question #1, the examination of what factors of attraction teachers attended to while making decisions, two important decisions were made. The first was to choose if the factors of attraction identified by Mancuso (2011) and Cox (2012) were best suited to be used to categorize the behaviour of teachers. The second key decision was in how to make identify valid findings from the data set.

The decision to examine the factors presented by Mancuso (2011) and Cox (2012) aids this study in that this formalism is tested in this previous research and these categories are established saving this researcher from making these delineations. The negative impact of using this formalism is that several of these factors are closely related making accurate categorization of teachers' protocols more difficult. Certainly a teacher that thinks about the how they may look forward to teaching a particular curriculum may be demonstrating a consideration of

professional growth opportunities, but it may also be an issue of professional satisfaction. To minimize the ambiguity of these codes, the context of the statement has been used to inform these coding decisions.

The second important decision was how to determine findings from the coded data. As discussed earlier in this report, the initial plan to pool participant's protocols was abandoned, as this would unduly skew the results in favour of factors heavily considered by the most verbose of participants. The highest number of segmented protocols gathered in this research was over one hundred fifty from one participant. The lowest number provided was just over twenty. Such a discrepancy made combining these data unsuitable. Instead the decision was made to treat each participant as a single case and compare the overall preferences of each case. This allows this research to accurately determine the most attended to factors for each teacher and base finding from that total.

This decision in turn created further questions. My first attempt at representing the most important factors proceeded by identifying the most frequently attended to factor by each teacher and graphing these 'most important factors'. The result of this process was to identify school quality as most important (5 teachers considering this most frequently), then financial compensation, professional growth opportunities, and personal well-being all next most important (4 teachers each considering this most frequently). As a check of the suitability of this approach the data was re-examined. This second look identified that while these factors were all widely attended to by most teachers, the frequency that personal well-being and financial compensation were thought about was noticeably higher than the frequency of teachers attending to ideas of school quality. While five teachers used this factor most

frequently, many teachers used this factor very little. This contrasted with the consistently high considerations of personal well-being and financial compensation, two factors that were in the top three considered factors for most teachers. To better represent this reality, the second most accessed factors were also tallied to create the finding shared in figure 5. After another re-examination of the data it was determined that this representation accurately portrayed the data set as a whole.

For research question #2, the examination of what processes teachers used to while deciding to accept or reject job offers, the data revealed that a discrepancy between the frequency that an approach was used by teachers and the degree to which that approach advanced the teacher closer to a decision.

As first presented in table 6, it is clear that some decision making processes were used far more commonly than others. There was however, no evidence that this frequency made these approaches more important to the overall process than other less frequently used approaches. Many elements of the decision making processes used by the participants in this study were undertaken without clear evidence that these micro-processes were vital to the overall decision to accept or reject the job offer or offers under consideration. Given that the overarching purpose of this study is to generate an understanding of how teachers make decisions, the challenge here is not to simply identify what teacher do when they are making decisions, but also to tease the important aspects out from this process. Considering this issue through the lens of the conceptual framework adopted here, it becomes important not to identify if teachers use rational evaluation, but if this quest for optimization is moving teachers closer to a decision or if it some other process that gets them there. While the frequency of

each approach was noted in the data set, the more important finding in the data was which of these factors helped teachers to make a decision.

In order to identify these approaches that advanced the decision making by teachers, the data set was re-evaluated looking not only for the frequency an approach was used but also for what processes advanced the teacher closer to a final decision. In some cases identifying these moments was very obvious, such as with teacher R who was very uncertain how to proceed between two excellent schools until receiving an email response from a current teacher at one of the schools.

It feels so good to know that someone else likes it there. Like she is writing me all about how the kids are really good....and I just feel like it is going to be good. I think I should take it...it feels good.

This communication was obviously not used as frequently by this or other teachers as other processes examined here but in this case clearly moved this otherwise uncertain teacher very close to final commitment to one job over another. In other cases identifying the impact of an approach was less obvious. For example, the impact of adding up the financial compensation packages or other rational analysis processes often moved teachers marginally closer to accepting or rejecting the job under consideration. This re-examination of the data used the coding formality described in Chapter 3 and the theoretical framework of dual process theory (Evans, 2011); rational and rule based theory (March, 2004); elimination by aspect and satisficing (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000); and game theory and matching markets theory (Gintis, 2009). Through these lenses the factors that advanced teachers become evident through a close reading of the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings of this study. In total, 20 teachers seeking jobs with international schools participated in all steps of this research and are included in the final data. These participants were drawn from volunteers that responded to a call for participation that was sent to all teachers that were registered to attend the Search Associates job fairs in Bangkok, Thailand, and Dubai United Arab Emirates, during the spring of 2014. This group of twenty met individually with this researcher after they had received one or more offers of employment with an international school to think aloud while they decided to accept or reject the offer or offers. The interviews with these teachers were transcribed, segmented into protocols, and coded to identify the factors attended to and decision making approach used by teachers when evaluating a job offer.

Results for research question #1: Teachers considering job offers attended to four factors of attraction far more frequently than other factors of attraction suggested previous research. These highly attended to factors of attraction are personal well-being, financial compensation package, professional growth opportunities, and school quality. The factors that were seldom attended to are relationship with schools leadership, professional satisfaction, and wanderlust.

Results for question #2, Teachers used a wide range of processes when making the decisions under examination here. Most frequently used of these were basic analytical and

intuitive evaluation techniques. Though these approaches were ineffective for most teachers at bringing them high levels of confidence about the value of the offer under consideration. The approach shown in this research to be most effective at advancing a teacher toward accepting an offer was researching. Teachers that gathered additional information beyond that which was provide to them by the offering school during the normal recruitment process were highly likely to view this information as more reliable. This additional information also increased these candidates' confidence in the value of the job offer and helped them to move closer to a decision. The strategies that were employed to gather additional information included having communication with a teacher that currently teaches at the offering school, communicating with a job search consultant or administrators, or internet research on the school and community. Additionally, it was found that teachers responded to time constraints placed on them to accept a particular job offer by seeking out contact with more desirable schools in hope of receiving a competing offer. If teachers had only a single offer they showed a strong preference to take the job even if they though they may be able to do better with continued searching. The teachers participating in this research showed a desire to stop the effort, stress, and cost associated with their job search, even if that might necessitate accepting a less desirable position than they had hoped for.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study interviewed job seeking teachers as they considered offers from international schools at job fairs in both Bangkok, Thailand, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Verbal protocol assessment (VPA) methodology, sometimes called the think aloud method, was used to gather data from teachers. This data was analyzed using methods suggested by VPA methodology to create an understanding of teacher decision making behaviour as they evaluate offers from international schools. This chapter will use the findings of these interviews and analysis to present guidance for school leaders to enact more effective recruitment within their organization.

This study was guided by the following questions:

Research Question #1: What factors of attraction do teachers attend to when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Research Question #2: What processes do teachers use when making decisions to accept or reject offers from international schools?

Summary of Major Findings

Teachers examined in this study attended to their personal well-being, the financial compensation package at the school, professional growth opportunities that the

school presents, and the school's overall perceived quality most often when considering job offers. Other factors identified in previous research including relationships with school leadership, professional satisfaction, and wanderlust were all considered infrequently by teachers during the decision making process at the job fairs.

A wide variety of decision making approaches were used by teachers that participated in this study. These approaches can be grouped into three categories: evaluation, researching, and issues of timing. During the evaluation phase, teachers typically used both analytical and intuitive evaluation approaches to assess the merits of the offer or offers before them. Teachers in this study only moved towards commitment in their decision making process when they had added information, especially when this information came from current teachers at the offering school, or when they felt the deadline for a decision pressing upon them.

Implications for Future Practice

The purpose of this study is to provide school leaders with a better understanding of the decision making processes used by teachers seeking international school jobs and use this understanding to generate recommended guidelines for them that can be used in future recruitment efforts. This research has been guided by the three theoretical foundations discussed in chapter 2. These are labour market perspective (Baker-Doyle, 2010), a behavioural economics approach (Thaler, 2015), and the applicant attraction model (Rynes & Barber, 1990). Viewing this research through each of these three theoretical components can be used to form recommended guidelines to improve recruitment practices by international schools.

Knowing which factors of attraction –overall compensation in the labour market perspective – matter most to teachers will allow schools to provide the most desirable rewards. Recommended Guideline One outlines improvements that school leaders can make to their job offers to maximize the level of attraction that these will have for most teacher candidates.

Despite the importance of overall compensation noted both in previous research as well as in this study, many of the features that candidates sought in their next position were difficult to assess during normal recruitment processes. Teachers may want to optimize their reward in this decision but are unable to effectively do so (Thaler, 2015). Factors of attraction such as school quality and potential well-being were shown to be highly important to teachers but difficult for many to assess using rational evaluation. Recommended Guideline Two suggests ways that school leaders can change their recruitment practices to give teachers better opportunities to gain a confident understanding of these difficult to assess factors of attraction.

In their applicant attraction model, Rynes and Barber (1990) demonstrate that how organizations hire makes a difference in their overall recruiting outcomes. Timing has become a major issue for the hiring of teachers to international schools (Cox, 2012). Teachers strive to end the recruitment process they show a preference to accept positions rather than continue the effort of a job search. This finding suggests that schools would benefit from the early offering of positions. However implications of such a move also have negative effects. This topic is complex and may require alterations for the entire field of international schools to improve their collective efficiency with regards to timing of job offers. Recommended Guideline Three examines ways that schools could work together to ensure that timing of recruitment is beneficial for the field as a whole.

These recommended guidelines for school leaders will allow them to become more effective at recruiting teachers. Such a change would have two effects. If a single school becomes more effective at recruitment than others, this would give that organization a greater ability to hire teachers to their school that school leaders identify as having the ability to improve teaching and learning within that institution. If most or all international schools improve their ability to recruit top candidates, this could lead to a more efficient recruitment process and reductions in the length and cost of the recruitment season. If a school can attract all of their annually required teachers at a single job fair rather than having to travel to two or three recruiting events, that would enable a huge savings in both financial and time costs. Such a savings could be reinvested in other school initiatives improving the school outcomes. These recommendations are made by considering the current state of international teacher recruitment, the current body of research in this field, and the findings revealed in this research.

Recommended Guideline for School Leaders 1:

School leaders should ensure that their financial compensation package is at or above comparable schools, and likewise ensure that professional development policies and funding meet or exceed regional norms.

As discussed earlier, the factors of attraction that job seeking teachers attended to most frequently while making their decision to accept or reject a job offer were: personal well-being, financial compensation package, professional growth opportunities, and school quality. Of these factors, both financial compensation package and professional growth opportunities

were areas that candidate teachers showed a clear understanding of from the information provided at the job fairs. Candidates were easily able to compare how one school compared to another and have high levels of confidence in these assessments. These factors were used by many teachers to choose schools to apply to because of the school's value across these factors or to eliminate schools that did not meet expected thresholds. Minor differences between schools were not important to most teachers, but schools that failed to meet expected norms of financial compensation were frequently rejected by teachers.

It was revealed in this research that teachers were willing to accept reduced financial compensation at least in some global regions, so long as the salary and other financial benefits matched or exceeded the norm at similar schools in that area. No such regional variation appeared for professional growth opportunities. The natural next question on this issue is what is the impact of higher than average compensation? While many teachers in this study showed a preference to earn more money, only one of the twenty participants actually received such an offer with exceptional financial benefits. She accepted that offer without many reservations. Certainly this suggests that such a structure has potential, but more research is still needed to determine the level of return on this investment.

While there are many elements to professional growth opportunities, the components that teachers looked for the most was a generous professional development allowance and opportunities to teach new classes or subject areas. Teachers also wanted to be assured that they would be supported with school leave to continue their professional learning. In no cases did teachers make a choice to sign with a school based primarily on this factor, but two teachers eliminated schools because of their perceived inadequacies in this area.

Many school leaders may struggle to meet this recommendation due to limited financial resources of their organization. Such leaders may be able to reduce other teacher related costs that had less impact on recruitment decisions to fund improvements in these areas. Shifting funds in this way would have a positive effect on teacher recruitment. For example, none of the teachers in this study compared schools by numbers of students in each class or by minutes of teaching each day. Reducing total numbers of teachers at a school in order to increase teacher financial compensation or professional development funding could be cost neutral to schools and yet may serve to improve the ability of the school leader to hire top teachers.

Recommended Guideline for School Leaders 2:

During the hiring process, school leaders should place potential new hires in contact with current teachers at their school.

One of the strongest themes that emerges from the data is the difference in the way that teachers consider factors based on the level confidence that they have with that factor. For example, teachers could easily understand and trust the salary figures, as this is easily quantifiable and communicated. Other factors, such as school quality and the quality of life that the applicant could expect in that community are more difficult to express during the interview process. While job-seeking teachers showed strong interest in these factors, it proved difficult for them to form firmly held beliefs about a particular school's value in these areas as these factors. Most of the participating teachers expressed a desire to go to a 'good' school' yet it proved very difficult for these candidates to know if a particular school had the high quality that they were seeking. Much of the information about school quality was supplied in narrative

format from the school either from conversations with the director or other school representatives at the job fair. These messages were also almost uniformly positive. In the same way that all of the teacher candidates at the job fair proclaimed themselves to be high quality teachers, all of the schools likewise labeled themselves as high quality schools. Discerning truth from these messages proved to be a challenge for the candidates examined here.

While past research examining teachers decisions to take or remain at an international school position have indicated that the role of school leaders is important (Mancuso, 2010; Cox, 2012), these findings are not supported in this study. Instead, teachers considered the school leaders very little and expected these people to be trying to sell them on accepting the school job offer. Understandably, teachers expressed reservations about their ability to trust messages from the school. This consideration was expressed more often by teachers when evaluating offers from smaller or less established schools, but almost all candidates that participated in this study showed some questioning behaviour. Often, teachers attempted to alleviate this concern by conducting further research about the school. This research included examining the school website, talking with their recruitment consultant, or communicating with teachers or other staff currently working with the offering school. Of these approaches it seemed that talking to people that were currently teaching at the school in question was the most effective at reassuring concerned applicants.

Numerous teachers suggested that they had chosen their future school because they could picture themselves being happy in that setting. This process was especially powerful for the teachers that had the opportunity to talk about the school with one or more teachers

currently working there or with teachers at the fair that had experiences with the school. These conversations increased the candidate teachers' understanding of the school and their potential well-being in that community. In all but one case examined here, these conversations clearly increased the teachers' likelihood of accepting the position. Those teachers that did not gather additional information about the school and community expressed hesitancy when they felt that they were unsure if they could trust the school or the directors representing these schools. This effect was especially strong for smaller and newer schools. The same reservations were not raised as frequently about large and well-established schools.

This finding suggests that schools would benefit from moving beyond relying on descriptions of the school and lifestyle from school leaders. Instead, by providing applicant teachers access to their current staff, schools gain trust and allow these candidates the ability to start to connect to the school community.

There are two ways that this type of connection can be made: connecting the applicant with teachers at the job fair, or connecting them with teachers back in the school community. Both of these approaches have can be effective, but they also present potential problems. If a school leader elects to connect applicants with teachers in the school community, then this communication has to be done by email or video call across what is likely to be different time zones. This approach may take hours or days to communicate back and forth, thus delaying the applicant's ability to accept the job offer at a time when hours are valuable to both the applicant and school leader. Additionally, the electronic based medium may reduce the effectiveness of this connection as the applicant may feel greater detachment from the current teacher. Should the school choose to connect applicants with teachers that were at the fair,

the communication is likely to be more timely and rich, but schools may be hesitant as to the message of these communications as those teachers at the job fair are leaving the school and may not paint the institution in a flattering light. Despite these concerns, teachers participating in this study frequently suggested that communication with teachers currently working at the job offering school helped them to imagine living and working in that community and alleviated questions of trust and school quality. The relative effectiveness of these two approaches is unknown at this time. It is clear that encouraging applicant teachers to communicate with existing teachers is an important recruitment strategy that too few schools use at the current time.

Recommended Guideline for School Leaders 3:

Schools should collectively agree to a hiring schedule to stop or reverse the current trend of shifting the hiring season earlier each year.

As discussed earlier, there is a strong element of a matching puzzle to the teacher recruitment process. At the start of the hiring season, every school hopes to find the best candidates and all teachers want to acquire the best jobs. A school leader from a less desirable organization spending the first day of a job fair interviewing top candidates may not be in their best interest as those candidates are likely going to be offered and accept jobs at more attractive schools. Questions of timing and where to focus one's efforts are germane to any study of this process.

This study revealed that teacher candidates, especially younger and less experienced ones, were likely to seriously consider or even accept the first job offer made to them if they

were unable to generate a competing offer before the deadline for signing. These teachers displayed some awareness of the timing dynamic by frequently asking for extensions in the signing deadline, or asking competing schools to make an offer before signing. Despite these approaches, these teachers seemed unsure of their relative value, and wanted to end the effort and cost associated with job searching. These considerations may cause teachers to show a distinct preference for schools that offer contracts in the early stages of the hiring season. Such a preference would put fast moving schools at an advantage while disadvantaging slower moving schools.

Many schools have already responded to this preference. Some schools were observed bending job fairs rules by conducting interviews the evening before the start of the fair and offering contracts during those first interviews. One director proudly stated that he tries to make sure that he is ready with the contract during the interview so that he can get a signature from the applicant before they have a chance to meet with anyone else. While such an approach is rare, and likely only used by schools that have a difficult time attracting top staff, even well respected schools have adjusted to this effect by advancing the timing of their recruitment efforts. Teachers are being asked to commit to leave or stay for the following year at their current school earlier in each year, and applicants are being screened and interviewed via Skype and other means ahead of job fairs by many schools as an effort to enable these schools to hire them before the fairs or more quickly while at these events. No longer is the hiring season only during the spring. Many schools have now moved to start hiring in the fall for the following year out of fear that they may miss out on the best applicant if they don't offer the top teachers a job at that time as their competition will (Cox, 2012).

While the research presented here suggests that such initiatives to be prepared to offer jobs ahead of competing schools may be in the best interests of individual schools meeting their immediate needs, this advantage must be viewed both at a micro as well as at a macro level. Is moving the hiring season earlier and earlier the best thing for international schools in general? It is likely that such a competition is an overall losing effort as eventually most if not all schools will make the same adjustments giving no relative advantages to any. In such a scenario, schools will be have longer to deal with 'lame duck' teachers that have decided that they are leaving at the end of the year, and more vacancies occurring after the hiring season when it is more difficult to find quality replacements. Additionally, the rapid interview practices described earlier may help a school land a desired candidate before other schools have a chance to intervene, but this surely reduces the reliability of the school leaders' assessments about these teachers' quality and may result in some hiring mistakes. This race to hire has many negative impacts and should be stopped if possible.

The independent nature of international schools makes regulating such a gradual but destructive change difficult. Those groups and organizations that facilitate communication and planning between school leaders such as the regional international school associations should encourage dialogue on this issue to attempt to maintain or improve the current timing norms to prevent this damaging hiring race.

Areas for Further Research

Factors Shaping Perceptions of School Quality

This research joins others such as Cox (2012) and Mancuso (2011) in suggesting that teachers use perceptions of school quality as an important factor when deciding to join or remain at a school. Despite this factor's key involvement in the decision making process, it is unclear how this perception of quality is formed or maintained by teachers. Ways that teachers have indicated that they learn about and potentially assess school quality include fair presentations, examinations of the school's website, and talking with other teachers. This study demonstrates that some evaluatory approaches such as gathering comments from current teachers at the target school form a more trustworthy valuation than others, but accurate understanding of the impact of each of these information sources remains unavailable. Almost all teachers attending an international job fair could tell you their which schools they think are best, it is unclear at this time where these assessments come from and how easily they could be changed.

Schools are aware of the value in being seen as a quality organisation. Evidence of this can be seen from the lavish and expensive websites being implemented and videos being used in fair presentations. Additionally, many schools advertise externally for teacher applicants in places such as *The International Educator* and most of these messages appear to attempt to reinforce or improve perceptions of quality. Despite this, there is no evidence found during this study to suggest that any school or researcher has examined what effect these marketing practices may have. As school quality is such an important factor in shaping teachers' decisions to join or remain at a school it would be valuable for schools to better understand ways that

they can shape this perception. Is it worth spending resources on a new school website or would that money be better spent on a video product that can be shown at the fair? This research could be structured with experimental conditions with hypothetical school websites or job fair presentations shown to prospective teachers.

Variation Between High-Quality and Low-Quality Teachers

Another area of research prompted by this study is identifying if there are differences in job searching behaviours in high-quality and low-quality teachers. Schools not only need to hire, but they need to hire the right people for their school. It is possible, and suggested by some school leaders, and also in the research, that different factors influence different types of teachers in different ways and that one such type of teacher may be better than another. Perhaps increasing financial compensation draws more teacher applicants but does not increase the quality of those applicants. Research into this question is not widely available at this time, as reliable metrics for evaluating the quality of teachers have proven elusive. Slowly however, reliable measures predicting teacher quality have started to emerge (Chetty et al., 2011), and it may be possible now to conduct research that examines these differences. Such a study could be a key understanding in any school's recruitment plan.

Increasing the Applicant Pool

A final area of research that requires further study and attention is an examination of potential ways to increase the overall number of teachers in the international school market. As detailed in chapter 2, an overall teacher shortage is clearly driving the overall difficulty in international schools finding qualified teachers. This research has operated under the assumption that the most important recruitment issue facing international schools is getting

top quality teaching candidates to accept offers once they are made. This assumption ignores the very real shortfall in numbers of qualified teachers in the international market when compared to overall demand for their services. While the literature and opinions of many school directors supports this idea that 'closing the deal' may be a key piece of the recruitment puzzle (Cox, 2012), achieving this may be impossible if there simply are not enough teachers in the applicant pool to begin with.

The applicant attraction model, as presented by Rynes & Barber (2009), suggests that there are three distinct strategies for improving recruitment effectiveness: improving recruitment practices, altering employment inducements, and targeting non-traditional applicants (1990). This work has focussed on improving recruitment practices and altering employment inducements, but improvements in attracting non-traditional applicants to this field may be just as important for school leaders to be able to hire the quality teachers that their organizations need.

While not directly part of this study, I spent a great deal of my time at these job fairs talking to school directors and others looking to hire teachers. Frequently these individuals expressed concern that there were not enough strong teachers, and that the competition for the best candidates was fierce. As noted in chapter two, there are clearly more international jobs than there are fully qualified teachers (Keeling, 2013). Growing the overall pool of quality applicants would not only help top schools by hopefully increasing the number of high-quality teachers available, but it would also help the less attractive schools that currently have to hire underqualified teachers. It is likely that thousands of underprepared teachers are practicing in international schools (Alexander, 2011) resulting in reduced educational outcomes for their

students (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010). International schools need to increase their overall pool of teachers. This trend is only getting worse at the current time as the growth rate of international schools far outstrips the numbers of teachers newly coming to international teaching (Keeling, 2012, 2013).

While there are certainly many approaches that have been used to increase the population of overseas teachers, I will discuss three of the most common ones here: increasing awareness of the career among teachers from developed English speaking nations, expanding the recruitment base beyond these typically used nations, and training local and expatriates in the school community to become teachers. I will discuss these in turn and suggest ways that these can be used more effectively than they are at the current time.

The first approach that may meet the increasing demand for international teachers is to increase awareness and exposure for international teaching opportunities within the typical teacher markets of the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Canada. At present, several universities within these markets already allow for overseas practicum placements. Additionally, both Queens University and the University of Northern Iowa host small job fairs giving their graduates exposure to the opportunities available in overseas teaching (Queens University, n.d.; University of Northern Iowa, n.d.). Additionally, some teacher recruitment agencies market to these teacher groups to a limited degree.

The inherent difficulty in relying on this avenue to provide more teachers is that these initiatives are not new, and there seems to be little incentive to expand the marketing that universities do on behalf of international schools. In the face of domestic demand for teachers, universities, especially those beholden to public funding, seem more likely to encourage their

graduates to work in underserved parts of their state or province rather than taking a job on the other side of the earth. The marketing efforts done by the recruitment agencies is also very limited and it would be difficult for these small companies to reach such a diverse and large group as would be required to significantly increase the numbers of teachers from these markets that go overseas each year.

The second approach is to supplement teacher recruitment from the typical developed English speaking nations with teachers from developing countries or non-native English speaking nations as well. This approach is already used by many international schools where recruitment decisions often come down to the choice between an untrained and inexperienced American (or Canadian or Irish) teacher and a qualified and experienced Indian (or Kenyan or Filipino) teacher. A deep examination of the relative strengths of each of these choices is beyond the scope of this study, but many directors express concern with this decision on several fronts. First, among many parents, the paying customers in the business of international schools, there is a perceived value in the Westernness of international schools that runs deeper than standardized assessments might reveal. The desire for these parents to see 'Western' teachers is a marketing reality that influences many directors. While some schools are motivated to keep this façade of Western superiority despite the limited training or experience of the typical applicants available to these marginal schools, other directors accept the value that diversity can bring and seek only to hire the best candidates, based on teaching ability, which they can attract. Of additional concern for schools facing this dilemma is that curriculum and pedagogy is typically very different in developing nations than what might exist in international schools. This may lead to a significant gap in skills and approach used by teachers

from these countries and place large training and adjustment burdens on an international school that goes beyond the typical markets for their teachers.

While none of the participants in this study were from outside the typical teacher supplying nations, there is a growing minority of experienced teachers at top international schools from developing countries or non-native English speaking nations. The successes of these teachers supports the idea that expanding efforts to attract top teachers from these markets may support overall education quality in international schools, but it certainly not an easy switch or one that should be undertaken lightly. In order to attract teachers from these markets more effectively, job fairs should be hosted in these new teacher markets, and international schools would have to better understand the teaching traditions that these professionals are coming from to be better prepared to support their transition into a new curriculum and school culture.

The third approach to increasing the number of international teachers that deserves discussion here is to train people that are already in the school community. Many expatriates travel abroad with what are often called 'trailing spouses'. These people have long been a source of teachers for international schools. Many universities offer online or summer session programs that lead to teacher certification and/or master's degrees. Talented and willing people in the school community can start as an untrained assistant or substitute and over a few years complete sufficient training to become a certified teacher. While this approach is effective, there is a limited number of trailing spouses in any community and the lag time between starting the training and completion may mean that many of these teachers are ready to move on to the next posting by the time they are certified to teach.

This approach can also be used with the locals in the community. For example, one Pakistan based international school found it was becoming increasingly difficult to hire from the typical sources. In response, they offered to fund many of their assistant teachers and other para-professionals at an American teacher certification program. This allowed the school to have a group of American trained and certified teachers at a time when political instability in their nation made it very difficult to hire American teachers. Unfortunately, cost is prohibitive for this approach. Not many schools are willing to spend so heavily on developing staff that may not persist with the organization, and locals in many destinations may have difficulty affording the tuition and associated costs of an American graduate school.

While these approaches show promise at growing the pool of international teachers as is so desperately needed, they each only make a small dent in the problem and it is difficult for any organization to enact any substantive effort. International schools have a decentralized structure. While most schools directors would acknowledge the collective value in efforts to attract more teachers to the field in general, they would not see enough value to their single school to initiate any substantive effort. Single schools cannot justify the cost and effort required to develop and expand the market of teachers just to see these teachers move to another international school.

Researcher Reflections

I began this research with a belief that the most important factor that schools can control in their efforts to facilitate learning is the quality of their teachers. Through my research, this belief has been strengthened. While continuing teacher development and

teacher retention are key factors in teacher quality, effective recruitment is also a vital part of ensuring that students have access to great teachers. As this study concludes I am hopeful that these findings can provide some increased efficiency for international schools hiring teachers. As I have moved through the stages of this research I have come across so many teachers and administrators who have similar messages identifying the wasted costs, both financial and in their time, of the current recruitment system.

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Appendix A: Text of Email Sent to Teaching Candidates Registered With Search Associates

Greetings, I am an international school teacher and doctoral student with the University of Calgary.

I am currently conducting research that will investigate how teachers make decisions about job offers from international schools. This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

I am hoping to find teachers that will be attending Search Associate's April Bangkok job fair who would be willing to share their decision making process with me during that fair.

Participants in this study will be entered in a draw for a \$100 Amazon gift card. This work may help schools to better understand what teachers are looking for in their next school and thus improve recruitment in the future.

If you choose to participate in this study your identity and anything that you share with me would remain confidential. There is no financial cost to participate, and doing so would require you to complete a brief online form prior to the fair and then to meet with me during the job fair. This meeting, which will be audio recorded, will last approximately 10 to 40 minutes and will not be difficult. You may end your involvement with this study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in or learning more about this study please email me at (email address) or visit (the study website).

Sincerely,

Steve Kellett

Dubai American Academy/University of Calgary

Appendix B – Study Sign Up Website

Screen shots of the sign-up website.





Recruitment Decision Making of International Teachers

[HOME](#)

[THE STUDY](#)

[THE RESEARCHER](#)

[THE PROCESS](#)

[SIGN UP](#)

THE STUDY



This study strives to conduct interviews with 15-30 international teachers during job fairs this recruiting season. Each of these interviews will examine decision making during the job fairs and what potential factors shape those decisions.



Data generated through these interviews will be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. It is hoped that these interviews will expose the decision making processes and motivations that influence job-seeking teachers to accept or reject job offers.



Recruitment Decision Making of International Teachers

HOME

THE STUDY

THE RESEARCHER

THE PROCESS

SIGN UP

THE PROCESS

PARTICIPANT SELECTION



Job searching teachers that express a willingness to participate in this study will be contacted by email. This first email will ensure that you understand the study and your role in it. This email will include consent agreement and ask for a summary of your job search strategies.

PRE-FAIR INTERVIEW



Before the start of the fair I will contact you by phone or Skype to confirm your biographical details and further describe the study process with you. We will also have a short practice interview to make ensure that you are comfortable with the process that will be used during the job fair.

INTERVIEW DURING THE FAIR



During the job fair itself I will ask to schedule a time to meet with you to conduct a 15-30 minute interview. During this interview you will be asked to walk through any decisions that you had to make during the fair and how you made those choices

[Sign Up Now](#)



Recruitment Decision Making of International Teachers

HOME

THE STUDY

THE RESEARCHER

THE PROCESS

SIGN UP

SIGN UP

By clicking on the link on the right, you will email me your interest in this study. Feel free to ask any questions you have.

Your participation and any information gathered about you will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. You are free to end your participation in this research at any time.



I would like to participate or find out more.

Appendix C – Practice VPA script

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study about teacher decision making. My name is Steve Kellett and I am conducting this research as part of my doctoral program with the University of Calgary. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what people look for when considering international teaching jobs, and how they ultimately make decisions to accept or reject a position offered to them. The method that I will be using to investigate this is a think aloud interview. During the think aloud, I will just be listening as you try to make a decision while saying every thought that enters your head. Don't try to explain your reasoning, just say what you are thinking. This may feel odd at first, and that is why I would like to practice this with you today. I am not recording this conversation, and it will not be used in my study, this is simply a practice. You can stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok, so while I know that you do not really have to decide this for some time yet, I would like you to pretend as though you are getting dressed for the job fair right now. What will you decide to wear? Remember, don't try to explain your reasons to me, just say every thought that comes into your head while you make this decision.

During the volunteer's verbalization I will remain silent unless they:

Ask me a direct question, to which I will respond: 'Please just continue to make your decision while thinking aloud.'

Stop verbalizing for more than 10 second, to which I will respond: 'Please continue thinking out loud.'

Make several explanatory statements, to which I will respond: 'Don't worry about explaining your thoughts, just continue to make your decision while thinking out loud.'

After the volunteer comes to a decision I will thank them for their effort. If they required more than three redirecting prompts during this process I would have stopped their deliberation and reminded them to try to relax and just share their thoughts as they come to them.

This process will then be repeated using the prompt: "This time I would like you to think of organizing your next unplanned vacation. If you had to decide where you will travel right now, where would you go?" The same corrective prompts will be used during this decision making process as was used during the first practice.

Appendix D – VPA Interview Script and Procedures

Thank you again for your participation in this study. Before we start, I want to remind you that you have the right to decline to participate without consequence now or at any time during the recording session. Tell me what offer or offers you have received today and when you have to let the school know by. <Pause for a response.> Ok. Don't feel like you have to make a final decision just because I am here, but work towards a decision. As you do, share all of your thoughts out loud just as we practiced earlier. Don't worry about explaining your ideas, just say what enters your mind. Pretend that I am not in the room.

During the volunteer's verbalization I attempted to remain seated out of their line of sight and silent unless they:

1. Asked me a direct question, to which I responded: 'Please just continue to make your decision while thinking aloud.'
2. Stopped verbalizing for more than 10 seconds, to which I responded: 'Please continue thinking out loud.'
3. Made numerous explanatory statements, to which I responded: 'Don't worry about explaining your thoughts, just continue to make your decision while thinking out loud.'