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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of eight American teachers in Christian international schools during the process of developing curriculum during their first year of teaching. In light of the purpose of the study, the following research questions framed this investigation: How do teachers describe their experiences of developing curriculum during their first year of teaching at an international Christian school? What challenges do first-year teachers encounter when beginning to develop curriculum for their classes? What are first-year teachers' expectations of support during curriculum development? How do teachers describe their first-year experiences of adjusting to a new culture while at the same time working to develop curriculum? Participants for this study were purposefully selected classroom teachers who had been teaching at an Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) international school for at least one year, but no more than three years. The theories guiding the study were experiential learning theory and the theory of cultural intelligence. Data collection methods included analysis of school documents, a photo narrative, and interviews. Data analysis procedures followed a heuristic research approach. The following themes emerged as a result of analyzing teacher interviews, photo narratives, and curriculum documents: (a) decision to teach internationally, (b) first year challenges teaching overseas, (c) effects of living cross-culturally, (d) developing curriculum at an international school, and (e) challenges to developing curriculum in an international school.

Introduction

Developing lessons and curricula that effectively meet the needs of diverse students is a major challenge that teachers face in international schools (Halicioglu, 2015). In addition, teachers moving

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overseas to teach in an international school and adjusting to a new culture often lack the strategies that are necessary to adapt, and confidence with the local language to be able to communicate with others in the new culture (Abramova, 2013). Much research regarding international schools examines how teachers transition into living and teaching in their new school setting (Bense, 2016). Many teachers struggle to teach a new curriculum in a new setting (Bense, 2016). Few studies, however, address teachers' experiences in the classroom (Reid & Collins, 2013).

Teachers in an international school often face curriculum challenges they might not face in their home setting. They are expected to assist students with developing intercultural competence; since students in an international school typically come from all over the world, teachers must help them to work together despite their cultural differences (Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015). Lai et al (2014) found that teachers often need support in identifying strategies that will help them teach content in an international setting. Corlu and Alapala (2015) pointed out, after researching mathematics teachers at an international school in Turkey, that sometimes in international schools teachers have the freedom to develop their own curriculum. While that can help teachers to include differentiation in their lessons, students sometimes have to focus more on the teacher's cultural approach to the subject as opposed to focusing on learning the mathematics principles the teacher is trying to teach. Casey (2016), executive director at Singapore American School, pointed out that a 'suitcase' curriculum—a curriculum that comes in with the teacher and leaves with the teacher—can be detrimental to a school's curriculum development.

The present study is significant because many teachers who decide to teach internationally are required to develop curriculum in one way or another (Waterval et al, 2015). Decisions of the administration and a teacher's workload are two of the main reasons that a teacher stays or leaves the teaching profession (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Mancuso et al, 2011). Consequently, the decisions that administrators make relating to curriculum could have an impact on teacher turnover. Administrators should be concerned about teacher turnover because of the negative consequences that high turnover may have on students, teachers, and the school (Mancuso et al, 2011; Ronfeldt et al, 2013). If administrators were provided with information about new teachers' experiences with curriculum during their first year, they could plan strategically so that new teachers might be more likely to experience success with curriculum development during that year. Informing administrators about first-year experiences, thus assisting them in developing solid support structures for first-year teachers, could create an environment where teachers feel confident, comfortable, and willing to remain for longer in the school in question.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of first-year teachers in developing curriculum at ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International) international schools. Developing the curriculum has been defined as teachers developing 'all the experiences that a learner encounters under the direction of the school' (Festus & Kurumeh, 2015: 62). Specific to curriculum development in an international school is the extent to which international teachers have to take into consideration, and adapt to, a new culture (Savva, 2013). The study was guided by the following research questions, all relating to American teachers who have left the US to teach overseas: (a) How do teachers describe their experiences of developing curriculum during their first year of teaching at an international Christian school? (b) What challenges do first-year teachers encounter when beginning to develop curriculum for their classes? (c) What are first-year teachers' expectations of support during curriculum development? and (d) How do teachers describe their first-year experiences of adjusting to a new culture while at the same time working to develop curriculum?

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study included Earley and Ang's (2003) cultural intelligence theory and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory, both relevant to the cultural and curriculum dimensions of this study. Teachers struggle to different extents with adapting to a new culture; Earley and Ang (2003) assert that the ability of some people to acclimate to a new culture

better than others is related to their levels of cultural intelligence. With respect to the equally important curriculum aspect, Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory describes the process that learners move through when they encounter new information and experiences. First-year teachers at an international school are consistently going through the experiential learning process as they are confronted with new information and experiences.

Earley and Ang's (2003) cultural intelligence theory and Kolb's experiential learning theory intersect with the concept of praxis. Livermore describes praxis as the:

> practice of becoming critically aware of how the values and assumptions of our cultural background shape the way we perceive, understand, and feel our world. Through this awareness, we're freed to act on those reflections and change those assumptions that no longer seem valid when viewed against new readings, events, situations, and questions (2009: 193).

The more culturally intelligent a teacher becomes, the more likely they are to experience the learning process. Livermore pointed out that 'Culture shock is a necessary process if we are to function effectively in a setting that doesn't recognize all or part of the assumptions and behavioral patterns that we've previously taken for granted' (2009: 217). Teachers who teach in a new cultural environment are likely to encounter situations that require them to reflect on their assumptions and teaching practices in the past, and re-evaluate whether that way of teaching is going to work in the present situation.

Methodology

Design

Moustakas (1994) described transcendental phenomenology as the process by which a researcher seeks to learn about participants' experiences with a phenomenon as it appears to those participants, arguing that the researcher in a transcendental phenomenological study should ask specific questions to help them to understand the phenomenon being studied. Researchers must ask the right questions in order to obtain data that will help them understand participants' experiences, thereby helping to understand the essence of the phenomenon. In this study, a photo narrative activity and interview questions helped glean an understanding of participants' experiences. As researchers we moved through Moustakas' (1990) phases of analysis by first immersing ourselves in the data that were collected, and then taking the time to process the data. This required us to analyze data as it came in, as opposed to waiting until all the data were collected and then analyzing it. Once interviews were conducted and photo narratives and curriculum documents received, the interviews were transcribed, and the process of analyzing the data began. As data was analyzed, themes emerged as a part of illumination, and then patterns emerged as a part of explication. In the end, connections were made between the participants' experiences in an effort to synthesize participants' experiences.

Data Collection

Data were collected to describe the experiences of first-year teachers developing curriculum at international schools affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), an organization with a mission to 'strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide as they prepare students academically and inspire them to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ' (ACSI, 2016b). ACSI serves two types of schools globally: national schools and international schools. The goal of ACSI in national schools is to support local educators in providing a Christian education for the local population (ACSI, 2017). International schools often have an expatriate

student population and a Western-style curriculum, and aim to prepare students for a university education outside the host country. International schools that are members of ACSI receive the following benefits: professional development opportunities, hiring support, student assessment tools, faith and teaching resources, and accreditation services (ACSI, 2016a).

After securing approval from ACSI, ACSI international schools were contacted through email. The director or principal of each school was asked if their school would be interested in participating in the proposed study. Following agreement from the director/principal, individual participants were also contacted directly and asked to complete the questionnaire provided if they were willing to participate in the study. Snowball sampling was used to identify potential participants (Patton, 2015). Requirements for the schools to participate in the study were that the school be outside of the United States and that it be accredited by ACSI. All interviews took place over video platforms such as Facetime or Skype. All collection of photo narratives and curriculum documents took place through email.

Patton (2015) claimed that triangulating methods helps the researcher to see different parts of a phenomenon, and multiple methods were used for this study in order to triangulate the data. Data collection methods included analyzing school documents, a photo narrative, and interviews. Creswell (2013) encouraged researchers to consider creative means of collecting data. While the photo narrative is not a common data collection method, it is a method that researchers have more recently been using in their studies (Casey, 2016; Snyder, 2012). Snyder (2012) discussed seeking a data collection method that was not time-intensive but would produce rich data, and the photo narrative falls into that category. It was hoped that teachers would be willing to make the time to respond to a photo narrative and participate in an interview, and that they might even appreciate being given the opportunity to voice their thoughts on this subject. Moustakas stated that 'Typically in the phenomenological investigation, the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and question' (1994: 114). Interviews were one of the main sources of data collection in this study.

An online survey was sent to potential participants in order to see if they met the criteria for this study, by working in an ACSI international school, having a bachelor's degree from an American university (since our focus was on this subset of all potential participants), having experience with curriculum, and being interested in participating in the study. Considering that cultural intelligence is one of the main theories that this study is built on, it was important to narrow the participants to teachers who were likely to be teaching in a culture that was not their own. Potential participants who met the criteria were then asked to read and sign a consent form.

Document Analysis

All accredited ACSI schools are required to produce a teacher handbook and a curriculum guide (ACSI, 2016c). For the purposes of this study, it was necessary for us to understand the curriculum development procedures at the school and to know what curriculum documents were available. We requested the teacher handbook from each school in order to provide insight into its procedures. The curriculum documents were then analyzed to understand their format for each school.

Photo Narrative

Snyder (2012) conducted a study in which he had participants take pictures that would help him understand their professional lives as educators, using 20–shot disposable cameras: each teacher then wrote about how each picture described their experience as an educator. Casey used a variation of Snyder's data collection method, asking educators to choose 2-3 images that illustrated their 'professional growth' and then to write 'a brief description in a narrative formation of the "teacher

you have become"' (2016: 167). For the present study, teachers chose three pictures from their first year of teaching to insert into a Word document, following which they wrote a short description explaining how the pictures illustrated their adjustment to a new country, culture, or school.

Interviews

Although some schools were given the option of having a researcher travel to them to conduct the interviews, as each of the six schools in this study only had one or two participants, it was more practical to conduct the interviews over a video platform such as Skype or Facetime, which is how the interviews were organised.

The following open-ended interview questions were asked:

1. Why did you become a teacher?
2. Please explain why you decided to teach overseas.
3. What previous intercultural experiences have you had and how do you believe these experiences have affected your first year at your current international school?
4. What intercultural experiences do you wish you had prior to teaching at your current international school?
5. What do you think are some of the benefits to intercultural training, exposure, or mentoring before one's first year teaching at an international school?
6. What challenges did you face as you transitioned to a new culture?
7. What highlights did you experience as you transitioned to a new culture?
8. During your first year teaching at your current international school, what experiences did you have developing lessons and curriculum?
9. What resources were available to assist you in curriculum development?
10. What role did other teachers at your school play in developing curriculum?
11. Describe the curriculum, materials, and resources that were given to you by the administration during your first year teaching at your current international school to help you develop lessons and the curriculum.
12. What advice or suggestions did you receive from teachers that have been working at the school for more than one year?
13. What type of curriculum support were you expecting from your mentor and/or administration?
14. What did the administration and your mentor do during your first year, in terms of curriculum support, that you have found helpful?
15. What are some examples of curriculum support that you wish your mentor or administration would have helped you with?
16. What direction were you given for long term planning for your classes?
17. What direction were you given for planning your lessons?
18. What are some of the challenges you felt as you began to think about lesson plans and long term planning?
19. What were some of the aspects of lesson plans and long term planning that you felt confident about? Why?
20. In the process of developing curriculum, what changes did you make while working through the process and why did you make those changes?
21. How would you describe your most beneficial, supportive, or empowering experience developing curriculum? Why?
22. Is there anything else about this subject you would like to share?
23. If need be, for clarification purposes, would it be okay if I emailed or called you?

Table 1. Participant Demographic Overview.

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Completed at an ACSI International School	ACSI School Location	First-Year Curriculum Participation
Alexandra	25	Female	Caucasian	2	Southeast Asia	lesson planning, developing units, developing instructional guides, choosing curriculum
Brittany	24	Female	Caucasian	2	Central America	lesson planning, developing units, developing instructional guides
Camilla	25	Female	Caucasian	2	Central America	lesson planning, developing curriculum guides, choosing curriculum
Diana	24	Female	Caucasian	1.5	Africa	lesson planning, developing units, developing instructional guides, choosing curriculum
Elizabeth	22	Female	Multi Racial	First Year	Southeast Asia	lesson planning, developing units, developing instructional guides, choosing curriculum standards and/or standards alignment, choosing curriculum
Fiona	21	Female	Caucasian	First Year	South America	lesson planning, developing units, developing curriculum guides
Henry	24	Male	Caucasian	2	Central America	lesson planning, developing units, developing instructional guides, choosing curriculum
Isabelle	24	Female	Caucasian	2	Africa	lesson planning, developing units

Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, and transcribed either by a transcription company or by the researcher. Patton defined member checking as 'verifying data, findings, and interpretations with the participants in the study' (2015: 524). In order to verify the data in this study, participants were asked to read over the transcripts of their own interview to ensure that they were comfortable with everything in them. If participants decided that they did not want something included in the record of their interview, it was removed from the transcript.

Findings

Participants

Eleven Christian teachers completed the online survey, eight of whom met the criteria and chose to participate in the study. Two teachers chose not to participate, and one did not meet the criteria of the study. Participants (7 female and 1 male) were assigned the following pseudonyms: Alexandra, Brittany, Camilla, Diana, Elizabeth, Henry, Fiona, and Isabelle. Participants came from six different ACSI schools, and were purposefully selected classroom teachers who had been teaching at the

school for at least one year, but no more than three years, though the focus of this study was collecting data about their experiences during their first year of teaching at the ACSI international school. Several participants were beginning teachers, and all of the teachers were in their first couple of years of teaching, with all information collected for this study focused on their first year. One of the participants had taught at an ACSI school the previous year, though she was not presently doing so. She was included in the study because we focused on her first-year experiences at an ACSI school. Regions rather than countries were used to describe locations of the schools in order to ensure anonymity of both schools and participants. Participants had a variety of different experiences of developing curriculum (see Table 1 for participants' characteristics).

Results

We began data analysis by identifying expressions from the interviews and photo narratives that were relevant to the experience of first-year teachers developing curriculum at ACSI international schools. We gave each expression a code, and then grouped the codes and expressions into larger categories. The document analysis was utilized to provide context for the data collected from the interviews and photo narratives. After reviewing the categories, we identified themes that emerged from the categories, which were as follows.

Decision to Teach Internationally

Participants had a variety of reasons for choosing to teach internationally. While each participant had a reason that was specific to them, several themes emerged among the participants about the influences and experiences that impacted their decision. Three main themes that emerged were as follows:

- participants felt called by God to teach overseas;
- participants' prior experiences had impacted their decision to teach overseas and their ability to transition well to their new school;
- participants appreciated the idea of trying something new.

These themes support earlier research by Crowne (2013) who argued that cultural exposure impacts cultural intelligence (CQ), and the work of Konanahalli et al (2014) who found that cognitive and motivational CQ were significant predictors for work adjustment.

First Year Challenges Teaching Overseas

For many of the participants, the fact that they had to adjust to so many new experiences was a challenge. Brittany described the challenges of being a new teacher in new culture in the following way:

> So, this is my third year teaching, but as a first-year teacher just being in a new culture, new people, a new school and being a first-year teacher . . . made a lot of challenges in itself. All of those things being so new, the newness of everything is challenging.

It often took time for new teachers to adjust to living in their new culture. In Camilla's photo narrative, she showed pride in the country that she is now living and working in, but also pointed out

that working in a new culture could sometimes be difficult. She included the following description in her photo narrative:

> I chose the picture of the . . . flag proudly flying over a brilliant sky and the mountains in the background. I thought it would be fitting to include a picture that represented the culture I lived and worked in. It took time to adjust to the . . . culture, and at some points it was and still is difficult working with somebody from a different culture.

Two of the main challenges discussed by participants for teachers adjusting to a new culture were trying to accomplish everyday daily life tasks and trying to learn the language.

Outgrowth of Living Cross-culturally

Participants articulated that after living cross-culturally (in other words, in a different culture than their home culture), they had found that their thinking had changed in regards to what they were capable of doing. In addition participants found they enjoyed engaging with the new culture. After living overseas, Alexandra and Elizabeth both found they could live confidently and independently within a new context. After working at an orphanage in India where she was the only one for miles who spoke English, Alexandra said, 'Those were probably the loneliest two months of my life, but they were some of the best too because I learned so much. And I learned I could do it completely on my own.'

Several of the participants shared experiences relating to where they engaged with the culture. The result of this engagement was often a better understanding of the culture, meaningful relationships, and insight into the lives of the people with whom the participants worked. Brittany expressed how easy it was to become detached from the culture and how engaging with the culture was often a choice:

> The school that I live in actually has their own apartments. So, North Americans are allowed to live in these apartments rent-free. I live in an apartment complex with a bunch of other North American teachers, so being on campus in the apartments it doesn't feel a lot different or like you're in a third world country because you're surrounded by people who speak your language, who have the same type of job as you, enjoy some of the type of the same things. So, it's very easy to just be stuck in your apartment and live in your own little world here. I live about 30 minutes outside of the city, so going into the city you can definitely—you immerse yourself in the culture a lot more. When I first came, the first weekend I was here we went to this stadium market, so like a farmers' market here, and I was super thrown into the types of food that they eat and what they're selling and how they go about selling those things. I think it was a little overwhelming at first but it was cool to actually be a part of the culture and not just stuck up here in our own little world.

Brittany chose to venture out beyond what was familiar and learn more about the culture in which she lived.

Developing Curriculum in an International School

In the interviews, many participants spoke about how their teacher training impacted their experiences of curriculum development. Participants described the resources that they used as they developed curriculum in their first year at their international school. In addition, participants described the systems or frameworks that were used to help them see the 'big picture' of curriculum for their school. Teachers also shared their experiences of team collaboration, while others shared their experiences working with one or two key people at their school.

Table 2. Experiences Developing Curriculum.

Participant	Experience with Resources	Key People/ Team Approach	Curriculum Management System
Alexandra	International resources found in the research room Sharepoint One Drive	Third Grade Team Primary Year Program Coordinators Specialists (Art Teacher, PE Teacher, Music Teacher) English Head	IB Scope and Sequence of Interdisciplinary Units Curriculum Maps
Brittany	Textbooks Resources with the Textbooks Online Platform Teacher's Guide	Third Grade Team	Word Document transitioning to Curriculum Trak
Camilla	Handouts in Binders	Third Grade Team Leader	Binder System
Diana	Textbooks Workbooks	Fifth Grade Teacher Second Grade Teacher/ Roommate	Atlas Rubicon
Elizabeth	Binders Library Books Cambridge Curriculum Account	Principal Other English Teacher Cooperating Teacher from Previous Year Lead Teacher	Scheme of Work Online Management Tool used with Understanding by Design
Fiona	Teacher Share Drive	High School Principal Previous Teacher	Curriculum Document Year in Review Document APL
Henry	Textbooks CDs Online Resources	Middle School Math Teacher	Curriculum Trak
Isabelle	Textbooks	Third Grade Teacher Fourth Grade Teacher Administration	N/A

Challenges to Developing Curriculum in an International School

Participants had encountered challenges with resources, frustrations with curriculum documents, and the challenge of being assigned additional tasks. A common theme was that participants faced challenges with the resources provided for them by their school, though the challenges were different for each participant. Another challenge that participants faced was feeling that curriculum documents provided at the beginning of their first year were not useful. In addition to challenges with resources and frustrations with curriculum documents, some participants were assigned additional tasks and responsibilities, in the form of extracurricular activities or additional responsibilities added on to their curriculum development responsibilities such as committees and clubs. One of the committees that teachers were sometimes asked to serve on focused specifically on adopting new curriculum for the school.

Research Question One

Research question one sought to describe the experiences of teachers developing curriculum during the first year at their ACSI international school. One of the themes that emerged in this respect

Table 3. Challenges with Resources and/or Curriculum Documents.

Participant	Challenges with Resources and/or Curriculum Documents
Alexandra	It would have been helpful to have all electronic resources in one place. She had access to Share point and One Drive, but was not sure how to navigate those tools.
	Overwhelming number of resources
	Summative assessments were provided at the beginning of a unit, but there was sometimes a lack of direction on what to teach in order to prepare students for the assessment.
Brittany	Brittany was given a username and password for online resources, but she did not feel like she was able to utilize the resources to the fullest extent because she did not know what was available.
	Additional training for online resource would have been helpful.
Camilla	Some of the resources passed down from previous teachers were complicated, messy, and disorganized.
	Frustrated that textbooks are not provided for all subjects.
Diana	Lesson plans from previous teacher were not usable.
	Many of the resources left in the classroom were not organized and not relevant.
	Lack of direction and feedback for lesson plans.
	Diana's school used Atlas Rubicon for long term planning, but the purpose of using Atlas Rubicon was not explained. The main explanation given is that Atlas Rubicon is being used for accreditation.
Elizabeth	Teachers often leave after their two-year commitment and sometimes those teachers do not leave resources for the new teachers.
	Elizabeth did not get curriculum materials until a week or two before school started. She would like to have received curriculum materials as soon as she got the job.
Fiona	Fiona was developing a new class, and many of the resources for the new class had to be created from scratch. A new curriculum document also had to be created for the class.
Henry	The lesson plans from the previous teacher were not usable.
	Some of the textbooks were outdated, so they did not have the online resources or resources in general that come with newer textbooks.
	The process of ordering and receiving new textbooks can be challenging, lengthy, and expensive.
Isabelle	Isabelle felt like she needed to cover everything in her textbooks. Once she understood that there were certain standards she was supposed to meet, then she felt the freedom to only cover those concepts and skills that were a part of the standards for subject and grade. She no longer felt the pressure to cover everything in the textbook.
	She was limited to materials she could get in the country where her school was located.

was the importance of training. Several participants shared how much of what they did with lesson planning had been learned when they were at college. The next theme that emerged was the different types of resources that participants utilized at their school, followed by the value of collaboration and key people (Table 2). Table 2 includes curriculum management systems that participants used at their school, including Curriculum Trak, a curriculum mapping tool used at two of the schools. Participants really appreciated having either one key person or a team of people to work with to help them work through their struggles with curriculum development. In addition, participants explained that curriculum development was less challenging when they were able to understand the long-term goals of the curriculum planning of the school. Lesson planning and working through the curriculum was easier when teachers understood the value of what they were being asked to do.

Table 4. Examples of Cultural Intelligence among Participants.

Dimension of Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	Participants' Experiences
Cognitive CQ	Camilla had previous experiences traveling and living in Latin America. She expressed in interview that her knowledge of Latin American culture and her ability to speak Spanish allowed her transition to Central America to go smoothly, which in turn allowed her to focus on her teaching.
Motivational CQ	Diana included pictures and descriptions in her photo narrative that exhibited her desire to engage with the culture. Some of the experiences she described included joining the choir at her church, visiting her pastor out in the country, and becoming prayer partners with some of the teachers at the school. All of the experiences described took place with people who were from the country where she was teaching.
Behavioral CQ	Alexandra described in her interview how her previous experiences in India taught her to 'weigh every word carefully before [she] spoke it, to try to maximize understanding and minimize confusion.'
Metacognitive CQ	Henry explained in his interview how the more intercultural experiences someone has the less likely that person is to come into a new culture with a 'macho mindset'. Henry said in his interview that 'the more intercultural things you do, the more you just see different people do it different ways, and different doesn't mean better or worse.'

Research Question Two

Research question two focused on the challenges that first-year teachers encountered when they began to develop curriculum for their classes. One of the challenges that teachers encountered was how to manage resources (Table 3) with some feeling they did not have sufficient resources. Others felt they had too many resources that were not useful, while still others felt they needed more guidance on how to use the resources more effectively. Teachers shared that they felt frustrated with the curriculum documents such as lesson plan documents and long-term planning documents (Table 3). Some teachers received lesson plan documents or long-term documents that they did not find useful, so they had to start from zero. Others would have liked to receive curriculum documents earlier in the year. Still others would have liked to be shown the school's long term expectations for curriculum development at the school. While teachers found that additional curriculum tasks and extracurricular tasks were often enriching to their experience, these additional tasks could be overwhelming and exhausting.

Research Question Three

Question three sought to understand teachers' expectations of support during curriculum development. It was challenging to find a common theme among participants relating to this research question. Participants had a variety of different expectations – including no expectations at all. An overarching desire for guidance was voiced throughout the interviews. Some participants wished the curriculum support had been offered as soon as they were hired. Some also noted that they had expected to be given textbooks for all their classes and relevant lessons from the previous teacher.

Research Question Four

Question four focused on how teachers described their experiences of adjusting to a new culture while at the same time developing curriculum. Dimensions of Earley and Ang's (2003) cultural

intelligence theory were found in participants' interviews and photo narratives (Table 4). Many first-year teachers had decided to teach overseas because they felt God had called them to do so and because they had a desire for new experiences. While the majority of the participants in this study had prior experience in a culture that was not that of their home country, some of the challenges encountered by first-year teachers related to learning how to engage with daily life in a new culture. In addition, a challenge for many of the teachers was not knowing the language of the new culture. As a consequence of living in a new culture, the teachers found that during their first year their way of thinking changed and they were able to experience many of the benefits of engaging with a new culture.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers in a number of Christian international schools during the process of developing curriculum for their classes in their first year teaching at the school. The study showed the value of mentoring in the curriculum development process. In addition, the study showed the importance of first-year teachers at international schools having resources and curriculum documents that are appropriate and pragmatic. The findings of this study aligned with Earley and Ang's (2003) cultural intelligence theory and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory, and will help to guide further research that focuses on teachers developing curriculum at an international school.

Developing curriculum in an international school

Teachers who were able to be a part of a team, which in this study often involved teachers being a part of grade-level teams, felt supported. The more support teachers had from a team or from a key person, the more the teachers felt confident and content with their experiences developing curriculum (Drits-Essar et al, 2017). Mentoring plays an important role in a beginning teacher's first year (Langdon & Ward, 2015; Manwa et al, 2016). Several participants were beginning teachers, and while all of the teachers were in their first couple of years of teaching, all data collected for this study focused on their first year. Few of the participants had official mentors, but most of the teachers could identify one key teacher or administrator who had supported them. It can be challenging to find high quality mentors because of the professional development and time needed to develop them (Beutel et al, 2017; Gardiner & Weisling, 2018). Ideally, teachers need to be able to be a part of a team or have a mentor, but when that is not possible, it is valuable for teachers to have key people with whom they can talk through curriculum concerns and ideas. Furthermore, if a mentor has had training, this will be in the best interest of both the mentor and the mentee.

Challenges to developing curriculum in an international school

One of the challenges that teachers faced in this study related to resources, rarely feeling completely satisfied: either they did not have the resources they needed, did not have the training needed to use the resources, or the resources were unorganized and therefore not useful. Hoglund et al (2015) argue that an organized classroom leads to clearer expectations for students and fewer opportunities for behavior problems, which in turn leads to more learning opportunities. Schools that invest in resources and in how to use resources effectively have the potential to impact classroom management and student learning (Drits-Esser et. al, 2017; Hoglund et. al, 2015). Some teachers in this study felt that administrators were sometimes more concerned about classroom management than with the teachers' experiences developing curriculum.

Teachers also expressed challenges with developing and managing curriculum documents. Every school in the study either had a process for ensuring that the previous teacher's lesson plans or curriculum documents were passed on to the current teacher, or had a process of developing curriculum documents as a team. Teachers in larger schools were often members of teams where they would lesson plan together, and teachers who were part of these teams were appreciative of the experience to work on curriculum together. At schools where lesson planning and curriculum development did not take place through a team, teachers expected to be given lesson plans from previous teachers. Some teachers were disappointed when they learned that the lesson plans or curriculum documents were not usable. Lesson plans where teachers described what they were going to use from the textbook each day, or that were not organized, meant that teachers needed to start from scratch developing lesson plans and curriculum documents.

When curriculum documents such as lesson plans are not usable for first-year teachers, they have to develop their own lesson plans, often with no guidance. In this study, all participants were in their 20s, and for several of them the post teaching overseas was their first teaching job. To add to the complexity of this issue, teachers who were not part of a curriculum development team often did not have mentors. Consequently, a first-year teacher – who was sometimes also a beginning teacher – was trying to develop lessons without support while also adjusting to living in a new culture. Capel et al found that teachers understood the importance of lesson plans, but that some teachers wrote lesson plans in order to 'tick a box' (2018: 15). For participants in this study, lesson plans completed by past teachers in order to tick a box were often not useful for future teachers. One participant believed that lesson plans written in unit plans would have been more useful for her and would be more useful long term. According to Capel et al (2018), lesson planning can take between 30 minutes and an hour and a half for one lesson. This is a substantial time investment for a curriculum document if it is not useful for the present teacher (if the teacher is only writing a lesson in order to tick a box) or future teachers.

This study has drawn on the theory of cultural intelligence (Ang & Dyne, 2009), which argues that a person's metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ impact how that person adapts to a new culture and works effectively within that culture. All the participants in this study had previous intercultural experiences, although some had more than others. Those who had fewer intercultural experiences were highly motivated to learn more about the culture in which they would live and work, and were open to the idea of having new experiences. Participants addressed metacognitive IQ when they noted their own cultural assumptions. When Henry was asked about the value of intercultural training, exposure, or mentoring, for instance, he responded:

> Not coming in with this macho mindset that your culture's the best. And I think the more intercultural things you do, the more you just see different people do it different ways, and different doesn't mean better or worse.

Another participant talked about trying not to be so 'embarrassingly American'. The participants were aware of their assumptions and had a desire to act appropriately in their new cultural setting.

Implications

Participants in this study shared that they enjoyed teaching abroad and engaging with new cultures. However, they also noted some of the challenges in developing curriculum as a first-year teacher in an international setting. All eight participants interviewed shared some aspect of curriculum development that was challenging. Given the limited number of participants, further research

would be of interest to explore whether these challenges are also experienced beyond the schools in this study. It might also be of interest to explore whether the challenges differ based on the size of the international school. The data from this study suggest that different challenges may be experienced according to the number of students and teachers at a school.

The practical implications of this study relate to international schools. Findings highlight the importance of having curriculum documents that are useful to teachers and the value of having support for first year teachers. Many of the challenges participants discussed in their photo narratives and interviews centered around the management of resources and use of curriculum documents. Teachers wanted access to resources that are organized and useful: if they do not have the resources they need, this adds an additional burden as they prepare to begin the school year. In addition, the curriculum documents that teachers use need to be pragmatic, with administrators explaining the value of curriculum documents, whether lesson plans or long-term planning documents. One of the frustrations of teachers in this study was that no one explained to them the value of completing curriculum documents.

International schools should consider, if they are not doing so already, that first-year teachers need a team or key person to refer to in order to discuss questions about curriculum. The grade-level team approach for developing curriculum was praised by participants. In addition, research shows the benefits of using the team approach (Drits-Esser et al, 2017; Wardrip & Herman, 2018). In small international schools with small numbers of teachers, developing an effective mentoring program can be challenging. In order to mentor effectively, teachers need to have access to professional development that is focused on mentoring and teachers need time to develop the skills associated with mentoring (Gardiner & Weisling, 2018). In the case where a school only has one teacher for each grade level, one possibility of creating a team approach would be to have grade levels work together as a team, such as kindergarten through second grade, or third grade through fifth grade. Teachers in this study who felt alone were more frustrated than those who felt supported by a team or a colleague.

This study was limited by the small number of teachers participating, its focus on ACSI only and, perhaps, by the fact that 7 of the 8 participants were female and only one male. Further research in a wider context with larger numbers of participants in a broader range of international schools would be of interest in identifying the extent to which the findings might be more generally applicable, or might vary according to context.

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