

The Retention of Expatriate Teachers: Exploring Its Influence on Curriculum Design, Teaching Practices, and Student Learning Outcomes

Ryan Yee Wong, Tsinglan School, China

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of expatriate teacher retention on curriculum execution, pedagogical methods, and student academic performance in seven (7) international schools in Asia. This study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating survey data among one hundred fifty-seven (157) expat teachers, fifty-two (52) school administrators, and two hundred five (205) students. Additionally, comprehensive interviews with seven (7) expatriate teachers, four (4) school administrators, and six (6) students were conducted to investigate the impact of faculty stability on academic performance, classroom engagement, and overall student happiness. The findings indicate that high teacher retention improves instructional consistency, fortifies teacher-student connections, and fosters a supportive learning environment, whereas frequent turnover breaks continuity and diminishes student motivation. While the study contains useful information, its reach is limited by the small number of expatriate teacher participants and key persons interviewed, as well as the potential influence of socially desired responses. These aspects should be taken into account when extrapolating the findings to foreign school settings other than the Type C hybrid model in Asia. This research underscores the necessity for deliberate retention plans and professional development to maintain high educational quality in international school environments. The discussion also encompasses implications for school leadership and policy formulation.

Keywords: curriculum design, expatriate teachers, retention, student learning outcomes, teaching practices

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Introduction

The retention of expatriate teachers in international schools is a complex issue that has a substantial impact on the learning outcomes of students, instructional practices, and curriculum design. In order to preserve educational standards, it is imperative to comprehend the dynamics of expatriate teacher retention, as international institutions become more dependent on them to provide high-quality education. The development and implementation of curricula, pedagogical strategies, and ultimately, the academic performance and engagement of students are all influenced by the presence and retention of expatriate teachers, as examined in this dissertation.

Retention is closely correlated with their organizational embeddedness and cultural intelligence, which are essential components of their capacity to flourish in foreign educational environments. Ren et al. (2021) emphasized that the flourishing of expatriate teachers is directly influenced by cultural intelligence, which in turn results in their actual retention. This discovery highlights the importance of equipping educators with the necessary cultural competencies to effectively navigate the complexities of international school environments. Yang et al. (2018) observed that the commitment of expatriate teachers to their duties is significantly influenced by the interplay of personal circumstances and workplace factors. This implies that to improve retention rates, educational institutions must establish supportive environments that foster personal and professional development.

Strategic interventions are necessary to enhance retention among expatriate teachers in international institutions, as they encounter obstacles such as culture shock and high turnover rates. Stasel (2023) emphasized that expatriate teachers frequently encounter culture shock, with turnover rates exceeding 60% in certain institutions. To alleviate these concerns, international school leaders must establish comprehensive support systems that cater to the professional and emotional requirements of their educators. Schools can enhance teacher retention and, as a result, improve student learning outcomes by cultivating a sense of community and belonging.

Nonetheless, despite the prospective advantages that expatriate educators offer to international schools, elevated turnover rates within this demographic pose considerable questions about the sustainability of these gains. High teacher turnover undermines the continuity of curriculum implementation, which is crucial for effective learning. Research indicates that teacher attrition, particularly in schools with a significant number of underperforming kids, can severely affect student success (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Turnover-induced instability might impede the establishment of trustworthy connections between teachers and students, essential for cultivating a supportive learning environment. The absence of consistency in teaching methodologies may result in deficiencies in student learning since incoming educators can be unaware of the established procedures or the particular requirements of the student demographic (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

To tackle the issues related to expatriate teacher retention, it is crucial to examine the elements that affect their choices to remain or depart. Research has identified various predictors of school commitment among expatriate teachers, including personal circumstances, working situations, and systemic educational characteristics (Yang et al., 2018). Cultural intelligence significantly influences the success and retention of expatriates, indicating that educators who are adept at managing cultural differences are more likely to sustain their roles (Ren et al., 2021).

Furthermore, *organizational embeddedness*, defined as the degree of employees' connection to their jobs, has been demonstrated to positively affect retention outcomes (Ren et al., 2021).

Hence, the retention of expatriate teachers in international schools is a multifaceted issue that is influenced by a variety of factors, such as organizational culture, curriculum coherence, and cultural intelligence. Teaching practices and student learning outcomes are affected significantly by the interaction of these elements. It is essential to comprehend the dynamics of expatriate teacher retention to maintain educational quality and cultivate positive student experiences as international schools continue to confront the obstacles of a globalized education landscape.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the impact of expatriate teacher retention on student learning outcomes, teaching practices, and curriculum design. Structured survey questionnaires were utilized to collect quantitative data from administrators, teachers, and students. The general patterns of responses were described using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, specifically one-way ANOVA, were used to investigate differences between groups based on variables such as the duration of teacher retention.

Concurrently, qualitative data were collected from open-ended responses and analyzed using thematic frameworks. Initially, the data was familiarized through repeated reading, and subsequently, initial codes were generated to capture significant patterns throughout the participants' narratives. This process was followed by thematic analysis. These codes were subsequently reviewed and categorized into broader categories, from which primary themes and sub-themes were inductively derived. The study ensured that statistical trends were enriched with contextual depth drawn from the participants' perceptions, while also providing a comprehensive understanding of how expatriate teacher retention influences key areas of international education by integrating the quantitative results with qualitative insights.

Specifically, quantitative data were gathered via surveys distributed to 157 expatriate educators, 52 school administrators, and 204 foreign pupils. To enhance and enrich the comprehension of patterns identified in the survey responses, qualitative data were collected via individual interviews with 11 participants, namely, seven expatriate teachers and four school administrators. A focus group discussion was held with six international students to gather their collective ideas and experiences regarding teacher retention and its perceived impact on learning.

Results and Discussion

The primary finding emphasized the “impact of expatriate teacher retention on curriculum development.” Two sub-themes arose within this theme: “teacher participation in curriculum development” and “curriculum improvement through retention.” Additionally, the challenges identified under “Theme 4: Challenges Posed by Teacher Turnover to Curriculum Stability” directly address “Question 1: How does the retention of expatriate teachers influence curriculum design and its implementation in international educational settings?” These challenges, particularly those found in “Sub-theme 4.1: Disruptions Caused by Teacher Turnover,” offer compelling evidence of the impact of teacher retention on curriculum outcomes. High turnover disrupts curriculum alignment because new teachers often lack

familiarity with established structures, leading to instructional instability, as noted by participants. Although fresh perspectives were occasionally appreciated, the primary concern was that turnover disrupts the consistency of the curriculum. In contrast, curriculum development and continuity were positively impacted by low attrition. Therefore, this theme transcends the mere identification of obstacles; it explicitly elucidates the impact of retention on the design and execution of curricula, thus illustrating the necessity of continuity in the teaching staff to preserve the stability of the curriculum in Type C international schools.

Quantitative findings indicated that teachers significantly acknowledged expatriate teacher participation in curriculum design, yielding a mean score of 4.15 (SD = 1.148), whilst administrators assessed the influence as modest, with a mean of 3.06 (SD = 0.85). Despite the one-way ANOVA results indicating no statistically significant differences among groups concerning years of teacher retention ($p > 0.05$), the consistently elevated means imply that long-term expatriate teachers substantially enhance curricular coherence, diversity, and innovation across various educational contexts.

The second significant result focused on the “effect of expatriate teacher retention on pedagogical practices.” Sub-themes recognized in this domain encompass “pedagogical strategies,” “innovative instructional methodologies,” and “assessment protocols.” Educators indicated that retention significantly impacts pedagogical practices ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.012$), emphasizing a transition towards more student-centered and dynamic teaching methodologies. Likewise, the implementation of innovative pedagogical methods, including project-based and inquiry-based learning, received a high rating ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.789$), indicating that educators with longer tenure in their institutions are more adept at enhancing and innovating their teaching practices. Assessment procedures were judged to improve due to teacher retention, as both teachers and administrators noted that retained expatriate teachers employ a broader range of effective and adaptive evaluation approaches. No significant differences were detected in the ANOVA tests among groups ($p > 0.05$), reinforcing the notion that retention uniformly improves teaching quality, irrespective of tenure duration.

The third significant finding is on the “impact of expatriate teacher retention on student learning outcomes,” which includes the sub-themes of “academic achievement,” “student engagement,” and “student satisfaction.” Educators assessed the influence of retention on academic performance to a significant degree, with a mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.687), which was closely reflected in student evaluations ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.922$) and administrative evaluations ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.808$). Teachers observed that student involvement was significantly influenced ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 1.004$), suggesting that consistent, experienced educators are essential in promoting student enthusiasm and active participation. Students and administrators likewise believe that involvement was significantly influenced, albeit to a lesser degree than teachers' assessments. The findings indicated uniformly excellent scores for student satisfaction across all groups. Despite the one-way ANOVA results indicating no statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$), the marginal p-value for student engagement among teachers ($p = 0.058$) implies a potential trend, suggesting that perceptions of engagement may vary slightly based on teacher retention, warranting further investigation in future research.

The results collectively underscore that the retention of expatriate teachers substantially improves curriculum design, elevates teaching techniques, and positively impacts student academic and emotional outcomes. The uniformity of replies among stakeholder groups highlights the importance of maintaining expatriate teachers in international schools. It is essential to acknowledge that contextual variables, such as curriculum style, cultural setting,

and student body mix, undoubtedly influence these correlations. The aforementioned characteristics, together with the study's restriction of omitting local educators from the sample, indicate significant avenues for future research to comprehensively grasp the intricate dynamics of teacher retention in varied educational contexts.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data indicates that the retention of expatriate teachers significantly enhances the academic and operational quality of international schools. The research validated that long-term expatriate educators significantly enhance curriculum creation, pedagogical innovation, and sustain elevated levels of student achievement, engagement, and satisfaction. The impacts were consistently detected among several responder groups: teachers, administrators, and students, and were evident in the robust mean scores given throughout the study.

The study indicated that expatriate professors who stay at an institution for prolonged durations contribute stability, coherence, and innovation to curriculum design and execution. Their continuous presence facilitates a comprehensive grasp of institutional objectives, educational frameworks, and student requirements, hence enhancing curriculum efficacy. While administrators assessed the influence somewhat lower than teachers, the alignment of attitudes highlights the importance of retaining expatriate teachers in enhancing curriculum achievements.

Summary

The findings revealed that expatriate teachers with prolonged retention are more inclined to utilize varied and student-centered teaching methodologies. Their understanding of institutional culture and instructional frameworks enhances innovation in the classroom, encompassing project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and diverse assessment approaches. The absence of statistically significant differences among groups in the ANOVA analysis indicates that these opinions are broadly held, supporting the conclusion that continuous teacher presence enhances instructional quality irrespective of years of employment.

The study confirms the beneficial effects of expatriate teacher retention on curriculum design, teaching methods, and student results, while also acknowledging its limits. The sample notably excluded local teachers, hence limiting the generalizability of the findings to the wider educational community. Future research should integrate the viewpoints of local educators to enhance the knowledge of retention dynamics. Moreover, subsequent research should investigate how factors such as curriculum type (e.g., IB, AP, bilingual programs), cultural setting, and student demographics influence the relationship between teacher retention and educational outcomes. Notwithstanding these constraints, the findings of this study provide significant insights for educational leaders aiming to improve the quality and stability of their institutions via deliberate expatriate teacher retention initiatives.

Recommendations

This study presents various recommendations aimed at improving expatriate teacher retention and optimizing its beneficial impact on curriculum design, instructional methods, and student learning results in international educational contexts.

School leaders and administrators are urged to formulate and execute comprehensive retention strategies specifically targeting expatriate teachers. These tactics may encompass competitive remuneration packages, explicit professional advancement trajectories, and robust institutional support structures that cultivate a sense of belonging and enduring commitment. Given that retained expatriate educators significantly enhance curricular stability and innovation, schools ought to pursue efforts that incentivize teachers to extend their tenure beyond short-term contracts. Integrating expatriate teachers into the school culture via mentorship programs, leadership training, and joint curriculum creation projects is likely to enhance individual teacher satisfaction and institutional success.

Secondly, specialized professional development should be provided for both novice and veteran expatriate educators. The data indicate that extended retention is associated with enhanced innovative teaching practices and improved student outcomes, so it is crucial to provide support to teachers throughout their tenure. Structured orientation programs and continuous coaching are crucial for newly hired expatriate teachers to expedite their adjustment and integration into the school's pedagogical philosophy. Experienced expatriate educators can maintain their engagement and motivation over time through advanced professional development options that emphasize leadership abilities, curriculum innovation, and cross-cultural competencies.

Third, foreign schools must meticulously consider the influence of teacher retention on student engagement and satisfaction. The findings indicate that a consistent teaching staff significantly enhances students' academic performance and emotional engagement in their learning experiences. Schools are consequently urged to constantly observe teacher turnover and evaluate its impact on student welfare and academic achievement. Establishing feedback systems that gather student insights on instructional continuity and assistance could assist administrators in making educated judgments on staffing and retention strategies.

Fourth, although this study concentrated solely on expatriate teachers, subsequent research should include the experiences and perspectives of local teachers to offer a more thorough knowledge of teacher retention dynamics. Incorporating local educators would provide a more comprehensive comparison of diverse staff profiles and assist in determining if the advantages noted in expatriate teacher retention are similarly applicable to local personnel or if distinct techniques are required for other groups. Furthermore, subsequent studies ought to examine how contextual variables, like curriculum type (IB, AP, bilingual programs), cultural influences, and student demographics, affect the association between teacher retention and educational outcomes.

Educational policymakers and accrediting organizations overseeing international schools are urged to acknowledge teacher retention as a vital measure of institutional quality. Policies that endorse extended contracts, facilitate professional mobility within educational networks, and encourage cultural integration activities can enhance retention rates and, subsequently, improve educational outcomes for students. Additionally, future research may focus on the precise reasons why expatriate teachers opt to stay or leave foreign schools. Understanding these motivations, whether personal, professional, contractual, or cultural, may provide more insight into the elements that influence teacher retention. Furthermore, a comparison examination of local and expatriate instructors could offer helpful details about who has a higher retention rate and why. Such research may uncover disparities in dedication, institutional support, or integration of issues that affect the length of their teaching tenure. These findings could help create more targeted retention strategies for each group.

Hence, the retention of expatriate teachers should be regarded not merely as a human resources issue but as a strategic imperative that significantly influences curriculum quality, pedagogical innovation, and student achievement. Implementing these ideas may enable international schools to establish more stable, dynamic, and effective learning environments that benefit all constituents of the school community.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the retention of expatriate teachers substantially enhances student learning results across various dimensions. Teachers, students, and administrators acknowledged that academic performance, engagement, and general satisfaction are enhanced when educators remain in the school community for extended periods. In the realm of student involvement, the elevated mean scores across educators indicate that the relational and motivating dimensions of learning are significantly affected by teacher continuity. Despite the absence of significant differences in the ANOVA results, the nearly significant finding concerning student engagement indicates that this aspect may be further affected by the duration of teacher retention.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that Grammarly, an AI-assisted writing software, was used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The author further declares that, apart from Grammarly, no other AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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Appendix

Result Tables

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Expatriate teacher Profile	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	80	51
Male	76	48.4
Prefer not to say	1	0.6
<i>Age</i>		
21-30	14	8.9
31-40	51	32.5
41-50	64	40.8
51-60	21	13.4
60+	7	4.5
<i>Years of Teaching Experience</i>		
1-3 years	7	4.5
4-7 years	24	15.3
8-10 years	33	21
Less than 1 year	1	0.6
More than 10 years	92	58.6
<i>Retention (in Years, current school)</i>		
1-3 years	59	37.6
4-7 years	54	34.4
8-10 years	17	10.8
Less than 1 year	17	10.8
More than 10 years	10	6.4

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Pedagogical Strategies

Pedagogical Strategies of Teachers	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Quantitative Interpretation
How much influence do expatriate teachers have on pedagogical strategies at your school?	157	3.6	1.012	Great Extent
How would you describe the teaching methods at your school?	157	3	0.832	Moderate Extent
To what extent do expatriate teachers use innovative teaching methods (e.g., student-centered learning, project-based learning)?	157	3.66	0.789	Great Extent

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Procedures

Assessment Strategies	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Quantitative Interpretation
Teacher Perception				
How involved are expatriate teachers in curriculum design at your school?	157	4.15	1.148	Great Extent
Do you think the retention of expatriate teachers positively impacts the curriculum at your school?	157	3.87	0.932	Great Extent
How would you rate the impact of expatriate teachers in enhancing the diversity and effectiveness of the curriculum?	157	3.85	0.946	Great Extent
Administrator Perception				
To what extent do expatriate teachers influence the curriculum design at your school?	52	3.06	0.85	Moderate Extent

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Quantitative Interpretation
Teacher Perception				
Do you believe the retention of expatriate teachers affects student academic achievement positively?	157	4.18	0.687	Great Extent
Student Perception				
How do you think the retention of expatriate(foreign) teachers impacts your academic performance?	205	3.67	0.922	Great Extent
Administrator Perception				
How important is teacher retention in improving student learning outcomes at your school?	52	3.88	0.808	Great Extent

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Student Engagement

Student Engagement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Quantitative Interpretation
Teacher Perception				
How does the retention of expatriate teachers influence student engagement at your school?	157	4.5	1.004	Very Great Extent
Student Perception				

How often do you feel engaged and motivated in class when taught by expatriate(foreign) teachers?	205	3.55	0.936	Great Extent
Do you believe that expatriate(foreign) teachers improve the learning experience at your school?	205	3.72	0.927	Great Extent
Administrator Perception				
How do you assess the impact of expatriate teacher retention on student engagement and satisfaction?	52	3.79	0.936	Great Extent

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Student Satisfaction

Student Satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Quantitative Interpretation
Teacher Perception				
How satisfied are students with the quality of teaching provided by expatriate teachers?	157	3.83	0.718	Great Extent
How would you rate the overall impact of expatriate teacher retention on student satisfaction with their learning experiences?	157	3.93	0.743	Great Extent
Student Perception				
How satisfied are you with the quality of teaching at your school, especially by expatriate(foreign) teachers?	205	3.63	0.954	Great Extent
Administrator Perception				
How do you assess the impact of expatriate teacher retention on student engagement and satisfaction?	52	3.79	0.936	Great Extent

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA Results for the Effects of Teacher Retention on Student Learning Outcomes According to Teachers

Teacher Group		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Student Achievement	Between Groups	2.581	4	0.645	1.38	0.243
	Within Groups	71.062	152	0.468		
	Total	73.643	156			
Student Engagement	Between Groups	9.095	4	2.274	2.333	0.058
	Within Groups	148.154	152	0.975		
	Total	157.248	156			

Student Satisfaction	Between Groups	3.615	4	0.904	1.663	0.162
	Within Groups	82.615	152	0.544		
	Total	86.229	156			

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA Results for the Effects of Teacher Retention on Student Learning Outcomes According to School Administrators

Administrator Group		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Student Achievement	Between Groups	2.823	4	0.706	1.088	0.373
	Within Groups	30.485	47	0.649		
	Total	33.308	51			
Student Engagement	Between Groups	0.283	4	0.071	0.075	0.989
	Within Groups	44.39	47	0.944		
	Total	44.673	51			
Student Satisfaction	Between Groups	0.283	4	0.071	0.075	0.989
	Within Groups	44.39	47	0.944		
	Total	44.673	51			

Table 9. One-Way ANOVA Results for the Effects of Teacher Retention on Student Learning Outcomes According to Students

Student Group		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Student Achievement	Between Groups	1.145	4	0.286	0.332	0.856
	Within Groups	130.881	152	0.861		
	Total	132.025	156			
Student Engagement	Between Groups	3.24	4	0.81	0.947	0.438
	Within Groups	129.971	152	0.855		
	Total	133.21	156			
Student Satisfaction	Between Groups	4.511	4	1.128	1.164	0.329
	Within Groups	147.209	152	0.968		
	Total	151.72	156			