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Motivations and experiences of expatriate educators in South Korea

Nicolette Oliver

Western Governors University

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Abstract

This research is a qualitative case study of native English instructors at the Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Education (GIFLE) in South Korea. A literature review of issues regarding expatriate educators is included. The guiding question for this study is why such qualified educators choose to live and work in South Korea. To collect qualitative data, the researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with teacher training instructors at GIFLE. Data analysis included an inductive process of categorizing data and interpreting the motivations of expatriate educators to live and work in South Korea.

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Introduction

We stand at the beginning of the 21st century, a time in which English is considered to be a global language of business, diplomacy, and education. Due to this phenomenon, native English speakers are in high demand as educators abroad. In response, a 2009 study of career trends for college graduates shows teaching English as a foreign language within the top "Dozen Hot Careers for College Graduates" (UC San Diego, 2009)

Settings for native English teachers span the globe, including all inhabited continents. Teaching contexts cover the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. They include the full range of public education from elementary and secondary schools to universities. Private institutions, from early childcare centers to large corporations, are also hiring native English instructors. Nonprofit volunteer and student/teacher exchange organizations are also becoming very popular (U.S. State Department, 2007). Increasingly, native English speakers are asked to teach not only English language skills, but also a wide range of other topics in English, such as western culture, business topics, and the full range of disciplines at the university level (Guardian News, 2009).

Merely being a citizen of an English-speaking country provides the basic credentials of teaching abroad. Some countries also require higher education such as a bachelor's degree before a work visa is granted. Some companies or institutions may request native English speakers to have certificates, diplomas or degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL). However, the quality of TESOL courses varies widely. Some certificates are awarded over the Internet within the span of one weekend (www.teachabroad.com).

As one can see, for a native English speaker, there is a wide variety of job options for even the less educated. One may think: with all these opportunities for work, why wouldn't

native English speakers teach abroad? However, expatriate educators face a number of difficulties.

For one, being separated from friends and family is a difficult situation to voluntarily put oneself in. Furthermore, being employed in a foreign country and culture can be very stressful. Finally, the pay and quality of life abroad varies widely according to each individual teaching position. With these important points in mind, I ask: why would a native English speaker chose to live and work abroad? In particular, why are people choosing to teach in South Korea? This study explores the motivations and experiences of expatriate educators in South Korea.

Problem statement

This research focuses on the phenomenon of expatriate educators through the case study of native English instructors at the Gyeonggi-do Institute of Foreign Language Education (GIFLE) in South Korea. What demographics or past experiences do these educators have in common? What motivated these educators to enter this setting? Do they share the same or similar goals? What is their experience like as expatriate educators? What are their plans for the future?

Literature Review

Introduction

As of June 6, 2009, a Google.com search of the phrase “teach English” yielded over 72 million results. As of March 14, 2009, a Google.com search of the phrase “Teach in Korea” elicited about four million hits. As of June 6, 2009, the same search yielded over ten million hits. It is clear this is a rapidly growing industry.

Labor market

There are many different types of work environments seeking native English teachers in South Korea. They are listed here in order from highest to lowest average salary:

- university language institutes
- government/private research centers
- editing/public relations, advertising companies
- corporate in-house language programs
- Korean government schools
- private foreign language institutes (hakwons)
- university academic departments

The students of these work environments are primarily Korean citizens, from early childhood students to adult business professionals (U.S., 2007). Most of these types focus specifically on teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

However, there are other teaching opportunities for certified teachers outside EFL, such as serving as a K-12 teacher within an international school. The US Expatriate Handbook by John Adams (n.d.) outlines four criteria for identifying a truly international school:

1. They have a curriculum that differs from the host country.
2. They serve the educational needs of an expatriate community living in a host country.
3. They have a student population that is international.
4. They have modified their curriculum to make the most of the international setting.

It also profiles the customers of a typical international school. While some wealthy local families may send their children to international schools, most students are the children of "upwardly mobile, highly educated, competitive senior executives…with over-achieving families

to match." It estimates that the latter population contributes half a million US students in international schools abroad (Adams, n.d.).

GIFLE

Amid the plentiful teaching opportunities within South Korea, this study focused on the Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Institute (GIFLE). GIFLE, which opened in 1997, is categorized as a Korean government school. It was the only institution of its kind in the country for a decade, until a similar institute was opened in Chungnam in 2007 (CIFLE, 2006). Its mission to foster effective communication, language teaching awareness, and multicultural awareness has been led by nine different directors in its short history.

Native English instructors at GIFLE primarily lead month-long intensive teacher training sessions for elementary and secondary English language teachers. Elementary homeroom teachers are often included in these training sessions as well. In addition, the first content-based training session for math and science teachers was held in December 2008. In some cases, public school administrative staff and nutritionists have received training from GIFLE for the improvement of their English language skills

Native English instructors at GIFLE are also expected to interact with school age children. Each fall, native English instructors participate in a month-long school visit in which they teach an elementary or secondary English course alongside Korean teachers. Furthermore, a new initiative for 2009 includes leading a series of one-day English Adventure Camps for elementary and middle school students.

Learning English in Korea

As of 1997, the U.S. State Department website reported that there were over 100,000 English as a Second Language (ESL) institutes in Korea. This number is sure to have grown

over the past decade, since the English language industry is estimated to generate US$15 billion annually (Glionna, 2009), with Korean families paying over 10 trillion Korean won on private education in 2008 alone (Arirang, 2009). In 2008, this employed roughly 54,000 foreign teachers legally (Kang, 2008). There was an estimated 32,500 foreign teachers working illegally in the country as well (Card, 2008). Thus, expatriate educators comprise the vast majority of the approximately one million foreigners currently living in South Korea. This literature review aims to shed light upon the context in which expatriate educators live and work in South Korea.

Students in grades 3-12 are required to study English language in Korean public schools. Grades 3-10 follow a national English curriculum, while grades 11-12 follow an elective-centered curriculum. The focus of these courses is communicative proficiency. By 2010, the government requires all English language classes to be conducted in English through a new "Teaching English in English" mandate (KEDI, 2008). Thus, teacher training institutes such as GIFLE are the frontlines of English education in Korea.

Korean students' perception of English language learning is not widely researched. Thus, due to its shared Confucian history, studies of expatriate educators in China were reviewed. Researcher Mingsheng Li authored a series of studies on expatriate educators in China over the past ten years.

In a 1999 study, Li identified the potential sources of the problems encountered by expatriate English language teachers in China and explored possible solutions to these problems. Results indicated that conflicts arose from the significant perceptual differences between Chinese students and expatriate teachers in some fundamental conceptions about language learning and teaching (Li, 1999). In a similar study conducted in 2002, Li reviewed the role assumptions and expectations that underlie the classroom communication between Chinese learners and their

expatriate teachers. He suggests that expatriate teachers' lack of knowledge of Chinese cultural and educational context inhibits them from teaching effectively. He asserts that expatriate teachers must understand their roles as teachers in a cross-cultural setting and adapt their teaching to the needs of students (Li, 2002).

In 2003, Li led another study, in which responses from 291 Chinese students and 12 expatriate English teachers indicated that 83% of teachers felt methods and content did not meet student expectations; 58.4% believed they combined Chinese and Western methods. This study showed that most students appreciated exposure to native speakers, but felt teachers did not understand their needs and lacked competence in teaching methods and Chinese culture (Li, 2003). Li's studies piqued my interest in the background knowledge held by expatriate educators of their roles in their host country's culture. What, if any, previous knowledge did GIFLE instructors have about Korea? What have they learned since their arrival in Korea that has impacted their classrooms?

Teaching English in Korea

The U.S. State Department website states that "Many types of people teach English in Korea. Some are professionally trained with degrees in TESOL; some hold graduate degrees in other disciplines and teach in Korea because they want to experience another culture; some teach English while doing other things, such as research; some teach while looking for other jobs; some are merely seeking any kind of work to help pay school bills; some are just passing through." What types of teachers are employed by GIFLE? What are their motivations for working as teacher? In Korea? At GIFLE? In the future?

The U.S. State Department further acknowledges that "Unfortunately some American citizens come to Korea under contract, with promises of generous salaries, bonuses and other

amenities, only to find themselves in tenuous situations, often lacking funds to return to the U.S." (1997). What is the experience of teacher training instructors at GIFLE regarding fulfillment of their employment contracts?

Another cultural insight from the U.S. State Department website mentions that "Korea is not an egalitarian society; one is either of a higher or a lower status than other people. How do foreigners fit into this scheme? The simple answer is - they don't. Foreigners are completely off the scope." It continues, "By and large, Koreans do not think teaching ESL is a professional occupation." What does this mean to Western teacher training instructors at GIFLE? How is their experience within Korean society?

Research design

In planning my research design, I first consulted Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application (Airasian, 2006). I decided that my inquiry would best be served by a qualitative case study of teacher training instructors at GIFLE. However, I continued to review other dissertations and theses to see how people have approached similar topics in the past.

Gerald Fast's 2000 descriptive research, "Africa: my teacher! An expatriate's perspectives on teaching mathematics in Zimbabwe" documented his personal experience as an expatriate educator. He taught mathematics in Zimbabwe and noted the importance of immersing oneself in another culture. He also pointed out the influence of teaching in another culture on understanding one's own teaching philosophy and practices. He reflected that this was a very rewarding experience for him, due to the personal and professional growth and contact with students, colleagues, and culture. Reading this research convinced me that personal reflections can be a valuable addition to the field, and I incorporated my own experiences and thoughts into my research.

A phenomenological case study of western nursing educators in East Asia was reported in the May 27, 2008, issue of the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. Authors Caroline S. Melby, Joan E. Dodgson, and Marie Tarrant interviewed eight nursing educators to research culturally collaborative models of nursing practice, education and research. Their qualitative study identified four themes of experience shared by these expatriate educators: differing expectations, the cost of the expatriate experience, bridging pedagogies, and finally, adapting and finding purpose. This led me to approach the issue of instructor motivation from a phenomenological perspective.

In 2007, Julia Richardson and Zikic Jelena shed more light on the negative aspects of the expatriate educator experience. They assert that there are not only difficulties with cross-cultural adjustment, but also unfulfilled expectations/opportunities for promotion. They also introduced "transience and risk" as two more negative factors of the expatriate educator experience. However, they note that there were some positive results of such transience and risk, which illuminates the complex and often contradictory nature of expatriate education (Richardson, 2007). What do teacher training instructors view as positive or negative factors of working at GIFLE?

Motivation

To continue my research on educator motivation, I read a study of the motivations of Filipino pre-service teachers' motivations (Hao, 2007). It referenced Sternberg's five classifications of educators:

1. Crusaders
2. Content specialists
3. Converts

4. Free floater
5. Early decider

It also referenced the three major categories of motivation:

1. Intrinsic
2. Extrinsic
3. Altruistic

In its final report, it classified pre-service teacher motivation into eight categories:

1. Idealistic
2. Migratory
3. Developmental
4. Employment security and stability
5. Supremacy
6. Liberating
7. Altruistic
8. Perpetual

This article greatly helped me think about the types of categories I may use to classify teacher training instructor motivation in South Korea (Hao, 2007).

A 1997 study of Korean teacher candidates shows a discrepancy between their ideals of education and their perception of the real emphases within schools (Joo, 1997). This study piqued my interest in regards to discrepancies in teacher training instructors' motivations to first enter the teaching profession, to teach in Korea, to teach with GIFLE, and in regards to their future plans. I incorporated these questions into my final interview guide in Appendix A.

Conclusion

In conclusion, GIFLE is important to the Korean educational system and the motivations and experiences of its native English instructors deserve more research if such teacher training institutes continue to be replicated across the country.

Research questions and goals

During my literature review, I found that expatriate educators were sparsely researched. This further intrigued me to shine light upon this topic. In an increasingly globalized world, this is an important educational phenomenon to be researched. As phenomenological research, I understand that my final report will not provide definitive explanations or new theories that can be generalized for all expatriate educators. However, I hope that it raises awareness of and increases insight into the phenomenon of expatriate educators.

In particular, the phenomenon of native English teachers in South Korea is fascinating yet scarcely researched. Thus, my main research questions are the fundamentals of understanding this phenomenon via a case study of native English instructors at GIFLE. Where did these teachers come from? Why did they come to South Korea? What has their experience in South Korea been like? What are their plans for the future? Moreover, the motivations of GIFLE instructors, including motivations for becoming an educator, working in South Korea, and training teachers at GIFLE will be researched.

The specific measurable questions asked of participants during in-person interviews are included in Appendix A. The specific questions asked during the focus group are included in Appendix D. I knew that each question was answered when I received a sincere, in-depth answer from the participants. If a simple answer, such as “yes”, “no”, or “money” was given by a participant, I prompted participants to seek more detailed or philosophical answers.

Methodology – Participants

Role and bias of the researcher

As a native English instructor at GIFLE, I was an active participant observer. I both observed and engaged in activities that provided useful information in the given situation. This allowed me to be immersed in the research setting in order to understanding what experiences and activities mean in this context. The bias of being a member of the group being studied is not only appropriate, but adds depth and insight to this phenomenological research.

Sampling techniques

Only native English instructors at GIFLE were included in this case study.

Appropriateness

The sampling techniques are appropriate because GIFLE is the first teacher training institute specifically focused on foreign language education. While the GIFLE model is currently being replicated in other provinces across South Korea, GIFLE is the original and longest-running institution of its kind in the country.

Participants

There are ten native English instructors employed by GIFLE. It is a relatively young staff, with the ages of the instructors falling within the range of 25-40, with fifty percent of instructors under the age of 35. There is an even number of males versus females, with five instructors of each gender. Seventy percent of trainees are single. The majority of the instructors are from North America, including three instructors from the United States and three from Canada. Other instructors hail from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and South Africa.

The education level of the instructors is high. The minimum education of all instructors is a Bachelor's degree, and ninety percent of instructors have received or are currently pursuing Master's degrees in the education field. Furthermore, seventy percent of instructors are certified teachers in their home countries and sixty percent have received certification in TESOL.

There is a wide variety of previous teaching experience among the participants. Prior the current contract year, all instructors have experience teaching adults. Ninety percent of instructors have teaching experience in their home country and/or K-12 classroom teaching experience. Seventy percent have taught abroad, and sixty percent have previous teaching experience in South Korea. Seventy percent of instructors have TESOL experience and forty percent have trained teachers. See Appendix C for further demographic information.

Methodology – Research/Evaluation Instruments

Data collection methods

Data sources included all native English instructors at GIFLE, including myself. Data collection methods included interviews, a focus group, and my own personal reflections. Interviews were conducted on an individual basis with GIFLE instructors. A focus group was conducted in the presence of eight instructors, including myself. During the focus group, quotes, charts and graphs representing my preliminary data from the interviews were shared with instructors for feedback. My own personal reflections revolve around my observations of the GIFLE community and my own personal reactions to life within this community.

Instruments

I kept field notes including interview and focus group notes. I also kept video and audio recordings of all interviews and the focus group. These were primarily qualitative in nature. The purpose of all of them is to describe, analyze, interpret and understand the group's shared

attributes. Interview and focus group prompts were primarily open-ended in order to gather more in-depth information than simple yes/no prompts. Data from native English instructor interviews were narrative accounts and reflections. My field notes included my observations from interviews and the focus group.

Materials

The interview guide presented in Appendix A was used during all in-person interviews. The focus group guide presented in Appendix D was used during the focus group. In addition, audio and visual recording data was gathered via a digital camera for all interviews and the focus group. After in-person interviews and the focus group, I converted the information into electronic form on a computer using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

Procedure

I informed GIFLE instructors of the project via e-mail and personal invitation and asked for their informed consent to participate in in-depth interviews and the focus group. The consent form used is included as Appendix B. I recorded the interviews and focus group via audio and video equipment for future reference. Participant anonymity is maintained by assigned code names for each participant within the final report.

Over the course of the research period, each instructor participated in at least one in-depth interview and eight of the ten instructors participated in the focus group. Regarding in-depth, personal interviews, the prompts provided in Appendix A's interview guide were distributed ahead of time as I scheduled one-on-one interviews according to the preferences of the individual instructors.

Once all interviews were completed, I invited participants to join a voluntary focus group. This allowed me the opportunity to use some of the preliminary themes and ideas that I pulled

from the interview data to use as a point of discussion during the focus group session. During the focus group, I distributed individualized data such as interview quotes and categorization of responses so that instructors could review the data for accuracy. Then, I asked instructors the specific questions listed on the focus group guide included as Appendix D.

Timeline

April 1st 2009-May 31st 2009

I communicated the research project to participants, requested informed consent forms, and scheduled in-depth interviews and the focus group. I collected data.

May 1st 2009-June 1st 2009

I analyzed the data.

June 1st-July 15th 2009

I compiled the final report.

Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the entire research project. Informal steps involve gathering data, examining data, comparing prior data to newer data, and developing new data to gain perspective. I progressively narrowed data into small groups of key data. Once I became familiar with the data, I began classifying, coding and categorizing data into themes (Airasian and Gay, 2006).

My interpretations were based heavily on connection, common aspects, and linkages among data, categories, and patterns. The process of breaking down data into small units, determining the importance of these units, and putting pertinent units together in a general interpretive form helped in interpreting and synthesizing data into general written conclusions (Airasian and Gay, 2006).

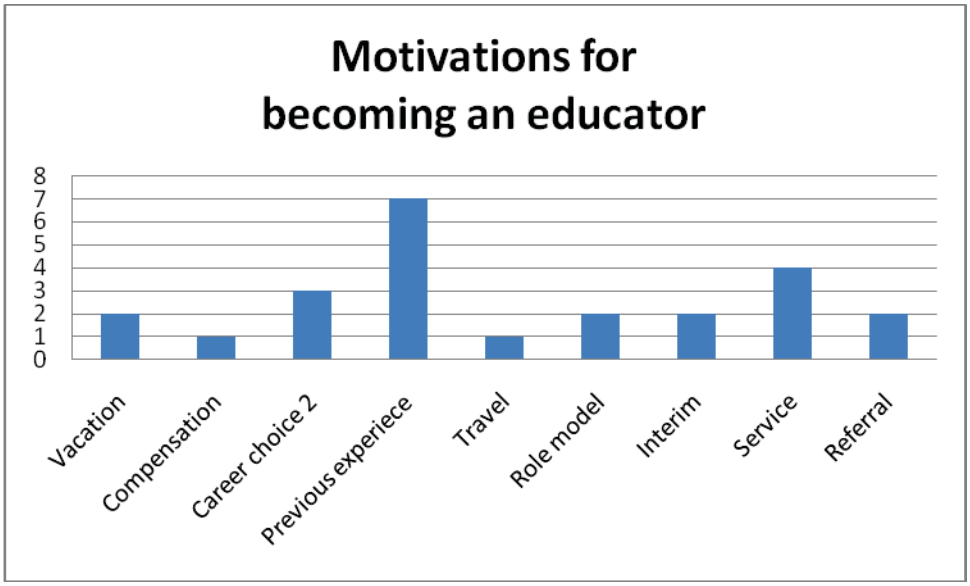
Rationale for the analysis chosen

Qualitative research includes a large amount of data to analyze, leading to the inductive nature of this data analysis. This is a very important perspective given the interpretive nature of the analysis and the emergent nature of qualitative research designs in general (Airasian and Gay, 2006).

Themes – Motivations

There were many themes that emerged from the data. The first noticeable theme is the range of motivations for becoming an educator, working in South Korea, and training teachers at GIFLE. The range narrows from nine major categories for becoming an educator (see graph 1) to eight categories for working in South Korea (see graph 2), and finally, to seven categories for training teachers at GIFLE (see graph 3). This was not surprising to me as I expected that as instructors make increasingly specific choices leading them towards training teachers at GIFLE, their motivations would become more similar to each other.

Becoming an educator



Graph 1

The predominant motivation of becoming an educator was previous teaching experience. Seventy percent of instructors cited a positive teaching experience as their motivation to pursuing a career in education. Instructor G describes her first teaching experience as a K-12 English teacher in Korea:

> "You're just thrown in the classroom with a bunch of books and asked to go and teach - sink or swim - and I realized, without sounding arrogant, I actually thrived in that kind of environment and conditions…My whole teaching experience in Korea has always been thrown into the deep end and I've been able to pull it off pretty well so far."

This response was somewhat surprising to me as I previously held a stereotypical image of teachers choosing their careers because they simply loved children. At the same time, this response was not surprising as I was personally motivated to become an educator through a volunteer teaching position with my local church. Instructor G's comment above resonates with me because I also felt comfortably challenged by my previous teaching experiences.

Next, four out of ten instructors were motivated by a sense of service. Instructor D explains how it feels to give back to the community via education:

> "I love teaching. Teaching is the only profession I would ever considered doing. It's what wakes me up in the morning. It's what puts me to bed peacefully at night. It gives me a sense of pride, a sense of self-respect. I love helping people. I love seeing that light bulb go off in my student's head when I know that they understand a concept… There's nothing better than that in the world."

I was surprised that less than half of GIFLE instructors were motivated by a sense of service. During the focus group, Instructor D expressed both surprise and dismay at this figure,

asserting that teachers who were not passionate about service are detrimental to student development. Instructor D admitted that she became an educator in order to serve student development. In response, all of the other instructors at the focus group nodded their heads. To clarify, I asked the instructors as a group and then in turn if they felt motivated to become an educator due to a sense of service. Each of them affirmed this via nodding or a simple verbal response such as “yes”, “sure” and “uh-huh”. However, none of the other instructors changed the data on their individual preliminary data forms to include service as a motivation for becoming an educator, even after a verbal reminder that they could update their individualized preliminary data for accuracy.

I found this exchange during the focus group intriguing. Why did the other instructors use verbal and nonverbal communication to indicate a sense of service, but not commit to this notion on their official data sheets? I believe the reasons for this discrepancy are complex. Instructors may agree that service is a function of their role as an educator, but admit that it was not a major motivating factor for their career choice. On the other hand, instructors may disagree with Instructor D’s sentiment entirely, but did not want to express an opposing opinion during the focus group.

Instructors may not have wanted to express an opposing opinion during the focus group for various reasons. One reason may have been shame. To admit in front of Instructor D that service was not a motivator would accepting the label of an educator who is detrimental to student development. Another reason may have been unity. Instructors are all foreigners who often look to each other for friendship, support and encouragement. There may have been fear that open disagreement with other instructors would hurt relationships and the sense of community. I believe it was a combination of these factors that caused this discrepancy.

The third most popular response was that becoming an educator was a second career choice. Three instructors are performing artists who would prefer to make a living as an artist full-time, but also enjoy teaching. So, they can support themselves as a full-time educator while pursuing the performing arts outside class time.

I found this information pleasantly surprising because I have a history of performing arts as well. I tried making a living as a performing artist full-time, but decided that it was not the best environment for me. This contrasts with Instructor F's motivations for becoming an educator:

> "In the work that I've done, there's always been…an educational side to it…When I finally decided that I wanted to go back to school, I'll be honest with you – I was reluctant…I really wanted to give the acting thing a real try…I didn't feel like I was really getting anywhere and so I thought…'I have to do something…with my life, so…if I'm not going to act, what else am I going to do?' and the only thing I felt…I was qualified for and that I felt like I had the ability to do was to teach…I always knew it was going to be teaching or acting. I always had that feeling…I didn't feel like I was settling for something. I felt like I was doing the other thing…as capable and probably enjoy doing just as much...Finally, I decided to become an educator…because…my acting career isn't really taking off and I think I should give this a try. I think I could be good at it. I think I could enjoy it…but I also want to keep my foot in the door of acting as well…I don't want to rule one out. I'd like to juggle both of them if I could."

In truth, a theme of performing arts within education was not very surprising to me. A classroom is similar to a stage in many ways. Instructors are often the center of attention when they are at the front of the classroom presenting information. Instructors must also respond to the needs of their audience of trainees. In addition, lessons must be entertaining in order for trainees to be engaged and excited about learning.

The next category, interim, is similar to previous teaching experience and second career choice. Interim refers to instructors who did not intend to become an educator, but happened across a teaching opportunity and later decided to join the teaching profession. Two instructors' responses were categorized within the interim category, including Instructor I with the following comment:

> "I wasn't really on any kind of career path after I graduated college, so if I didn't get the job [teaching]…I don't know what I would have done. I don't know if I really would have gone to graduate school, but it was time to move on to something bigger than…doing different kinds of things that weren't of career significance…"

Other two-response motivations for becoming an educator include a positive role model, ample vacation time, and a friend's referral. Additionally, one instructor named compensation and another identified the opportunity to travel as a motivator for becoming an educator. During the focus group, many instructors were surprised that there was even one person who entered the teaching profession due to compensation. Education is notorious for its low-paying positions.

Many instructors were also surprised that positive role models did not play a larger role in motivating people to become educators. I was especially surprised by Instructor H's role model, a character from a popular television show:

> "*Little House on the Prairie*…When I was a child, it was my favorite show, and my favorite character was the single teacher, Ms. Beedle, and I just always wanted be a teacher from then. And then I had good teacher influences throughout my career, throughout my education."

Teaching in South Korea

Graph 2

There was a tie for the most popular motivation for teaching in South Korea. With seven out of ten instructors in agreement, compensation and friend referral were the leading motivations for working in South Korea. I was surprised that so many instructors received friend referrals to teach in South Korea. Prior to coming to South Korea, I did not know anyone who had taught English in South Korea. Furthermore, my friends and family were very surprised by my decision to teach in South Korea. It seemed like a very novel idea to people I knew in the United States.

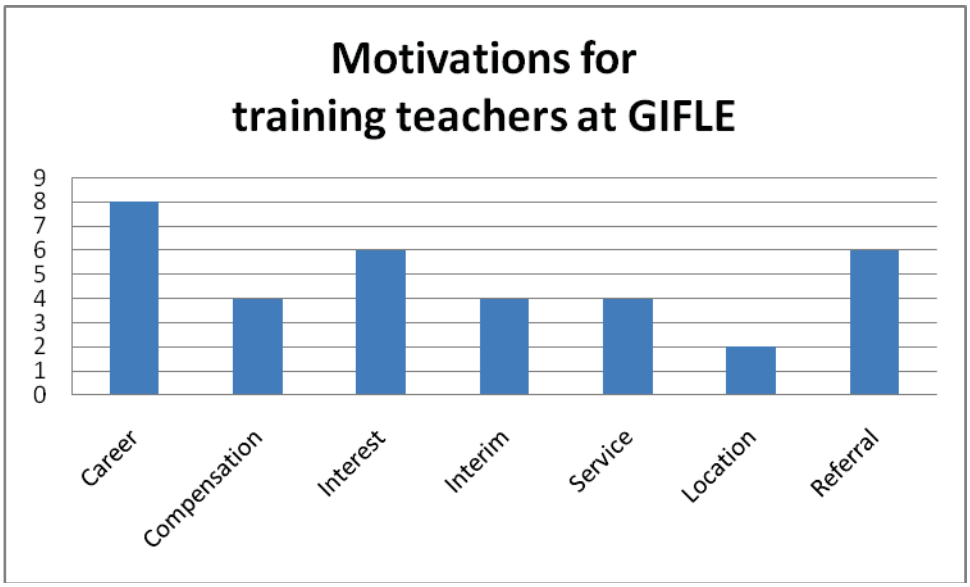
With six responses each, there was another tie between opportunities to travel and to advance or expand their teaching careers. Regarding opportunities to travel, few instructors

noted a desire to travel to South Korea, but many were eager to visit nearby countries in Asia. Many instructors viewed South Korea as a base from which they could explore other Asian countries.

Other responses included interest in South Korea, interest in Asia, job availability and a sense of service. Interestingly, many instructors expressed a general interest in teaching somewhere in Asia, but finally decided on teaching in South Korea due to Korea's comparatively higher compensation packages. A typical response was voiced by Instructor D:

> "The friend referral is what really made me want to come. That and the fact that I always wanted to come to Asia…anywhere in Asia. I never thought Korea, though, to be honest…Indonesia, Bali, Malaysia, Tibet...Cambodia…Even in Japan…the money wasn't as lucrative as it was here in Korea. The salaries were comparable, but they would not cover your rent…wouldn't cover your roundtrip ticket…So, Korea was a total package – rent and roundtrip ticket – that really was great."

Training teachers at GIFLE



Graph 3

The number one motivation for training teachers at GIFLE was to advance or expand instructors' teaching careers. Eighty percent of instructors said their coming to GIFLE was a career move to enhance their resume. Here are some of the comments instructors made regarding their motivation for training teachers:

> "For me, it was really about the career choice of having this experience of teaching teachers." –Instructor H
>
> "I was surprised to get this job because I had just graduated from my teacher training...This is a teacher training institute, so it seemed odd to me that I got hired here, but I was very grateful because it seemed to be a big step up." –Instructor C

This was categorized separately from personal interest in working at GIFLE, which garnered six responses. Instructor D was motivated to work at GIFLE in order "to teach teachers…I taught at a teacher training college…so I'm familiar with teaching seasoned educators. So, that's what really motivated me to come here."

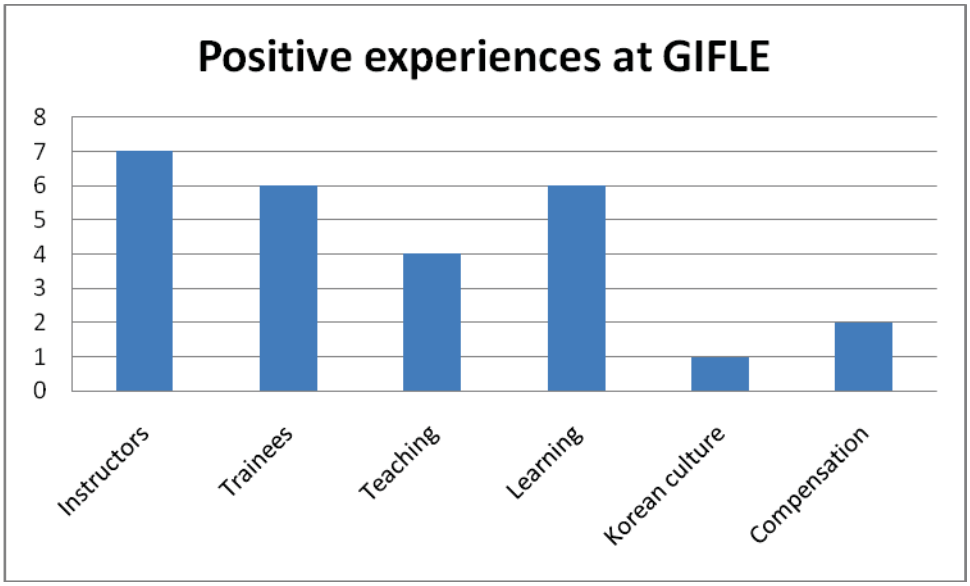
Also with six responses, was a friend referral to work at GIFLE. Other motivators included compensation, service and interim. A sense of service is depicted in Instructor E's response below:

> "The thought of influencing the influencers was kind of appealing to me. After working in the private institutes and encountering Koreans from all walks of life, I kind of became aware of such big problems in the way they learn English…I thought, in the grand scheme of things, it would be more productive to be working with the teachers and the education system."

Interim within this category focused on taking a break from other types of teaching. Instructor F explained "I think I need a little break from kids right now. The idea of working with adults appealed to me." In addition, two instructors named location as a motivator for working at GIFLE.

Themes – Experiences at GIFLE

Positive experiences



Graph 4

At GIFLE, positive experiences revolve around the community and classroom experience. Instructors appreciate each other and their trainees. Regarding fellow instructors, Instructor F says, "I've enjoyed working with the other instructors – meeting very interesting, talented people." Regarding interaction with trainees, Instructor D tells:

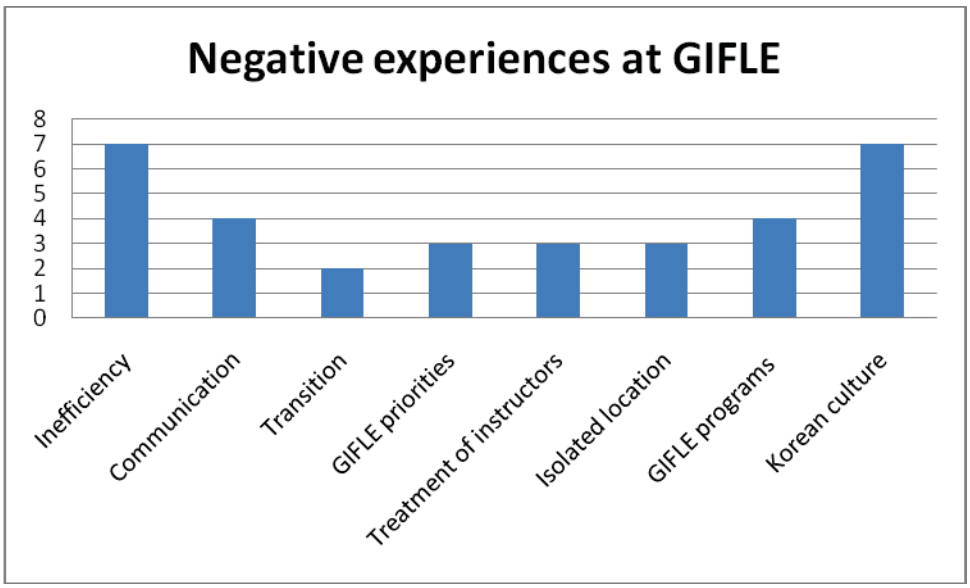
> "How amazing it is to teach teachers! They're eager students. And learning what teachers really need – the realistic things teachers need in the classroom – and being able to give that to them. Those are the things that I think I'm most proud of and really feel like they're the best part of my job."

Instructors also greatly enjoy being in the classroom. They enjoy both teaching and learning aspects. Instructor G relates the following:

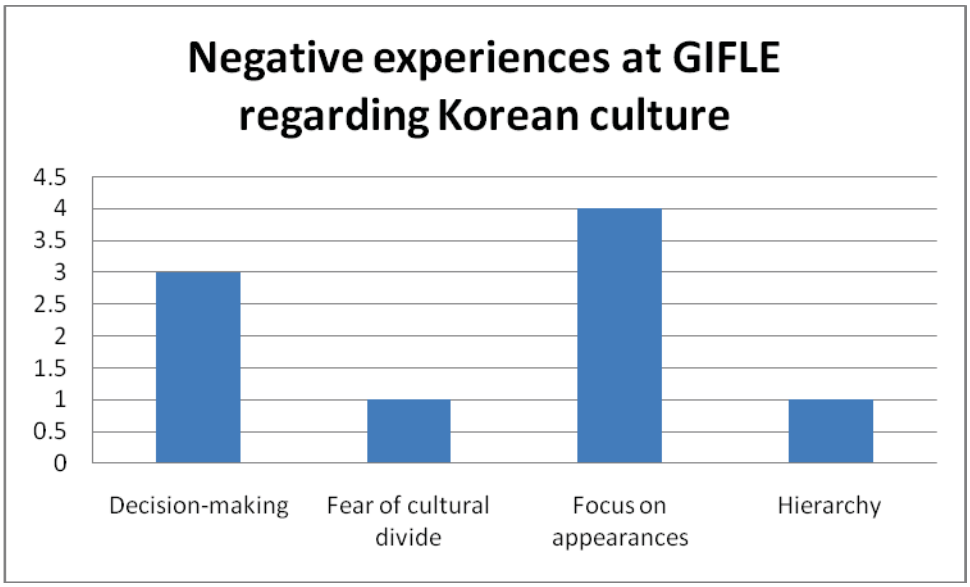
> "Developing much more advanced curriculum where I could really use the theories I've learned during my MA and try to put it into practice and really kind of see either see it work or kind of backfire, but then you realize, you learn from that experience…The learning experience has been the most beneficial for me…we learned about…the theories of it during my MA, but you really, really don't get it until you're teaching it yourself. And it's advanced theory of TESOL and applied linguistics, but you can do that in this workplace because you have these really educated teachers…it's always been a constant challenge and push, and I like that…I'm always kept on my toes."

Other positive experiences mentioned by instructors include two references to compensation and one reference to Korean culture. During the focus group, the positive reference to Korean culture was surprising to most participants because Korean culture was a leading negative experience, as described in the section below.

Negative experiences



Graph 5



Graph 6

With the exception of GIFLE's isolated location, all other responses regarding negative experiences at GIFLE depict disagreements over how GIFLE is run. Instructors complain of inefficiency, lack of communication between Korean and foreign staff, poor treatment of

instructors by Korean staff, specific GIFLE programs, GIFLE priorities, and lack of transitional support.

Seventy percent of instructors cited inefficiency as a negative experience at GIFLE. Instructor A describes some of this inefficiency with the following quote:

> "I think planning could be a lot better, and some of the things don't seem completely thought out and appropriate for what they want to achieve here…What I would call 'busy work'…used up our time on something I don't see as productive or useful."

Instructor H elaborates on this inefficiency by adding:

> "that something is said 'Oh, we should change this' but nobody really takes the initiative to actually change it – they dance around it a lot. So, changes don't get made that need to get made. And that is very, very frustrating."

Korean culture tied with inefficiency as the most negative experience at GIFLE. Within this category, instructors expressed frustrations regarding the focus on appearances, decision-making, Korea's strict hierarchy system and a general fear of the cultural divide. Focus on appearances refers to the strong cultural need to uphold a positive public image regardless of efficiency or integrity. Instructor B gave an opinion on decision-making and Korea's strict hierarchy system, saying "collaboration rather than one person at the top making decisions would be much better." Regarding a general fear of the cultural divide, Instructor E noted "a little bit of tension like 'Oh, I hope I don't do the wrong thing'."

There are many examples of the lack of communication between Korean and foreign staff. To begin, much information is provided in Korean to Korean staff and Korean trainees without English translations for native English instructors. In addition, native English instructors

are not allowed to contribute discussion items to Korean and foreign staff meeting agendas. Furthermore, scheduled meetings are often cancelled last-minute by Korean staff, so there are limited opportunities for foreign staff members to have their concerns addressed.

Tied for second place with lack of communication between Korean and foreign staff are complaints regarding GIFLE programs. In the following excerpt, Instructor I laments:

> "They can kind of change your job and throw these kids in a camp environment at you…When you took this job it was nothing at all related to teaching kids. You were supposed to be working at a teacher training institute. And I don't see the connection…That's not what I came here for…It really has nothing much at all to do with teacher training."

GIFLE priorities and poor treatment of instructors by Korean staff were noted by thirty percent of instructors as being negative experiences at GIFLE. Instructor C expresses the following opinion on GIFLE priorities:

> "They should provide curriculum. They should provide objectives, learning aids, structure, but they don't - which leads me to believe they don't really have too much concern about the learning outcomes of the institute."

To illustrate GIFLE programs and priorities, consider the English Adventure Camps. A group of approximately 80 students in grade 3-9 come to GIFLE for one day. Students are divided into groups of 8 and distributed among the 10 instructors for a 90-minute session. There is no curriculum and there are no clear objectives. Instructors simply spend time with the students for 90 minutes then release the students for lunch. Much time is spent on classroom management as instructors struggle to maintain order in a classroom without a Korean teacher among students with extremely limited English ability. After lunch, instructors receive another

set of 8 students for an afternoon session of, again, 90 minutes. Then, the students leave GIFLE. Nearly a dozen of these Camps are scheduled throughout 2009 and it is unclear to instructors what the purpose of this program is. This is particularly disheartening when four of ten, nearly half of all instructors, chose to work at GIFLE as an interim position to take a break from teaching children.

Instructor F talks about some of the poor treatment of instructors by Korean staff:

> "The treatment…some instructors get from the supervisors is something that irks me…I wish that there was more professionalism amongst the Korean staff…Overall, there might be a lack of respect for our professionalism. I'm not so sure at times they really regard what we do and what we can do with a lot of respect, although, at the same time, they expect us to do a lot."

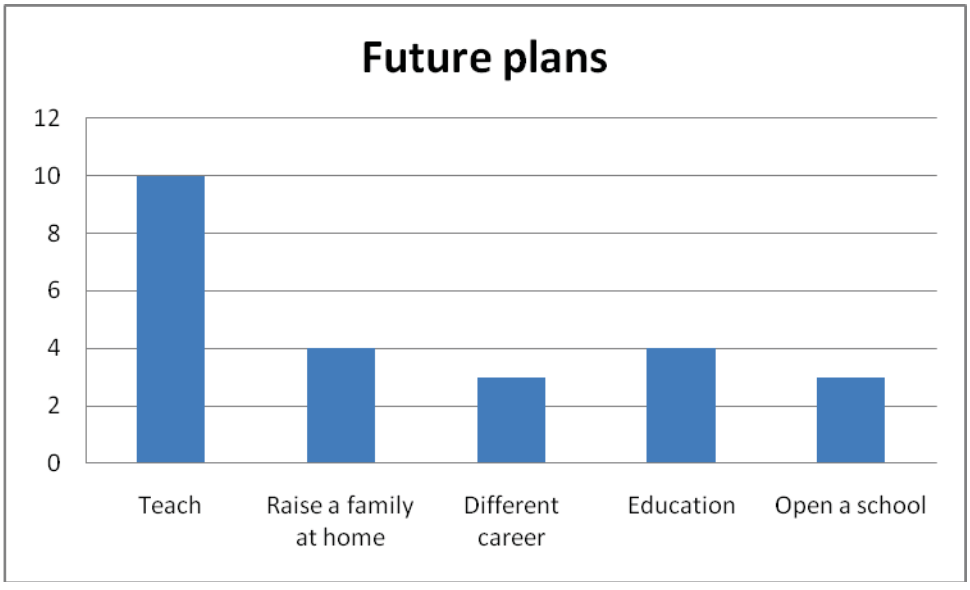
Since November 2008, I have personally experienced poor treatment and difficulties regarding fulfillment of my contract. Regarding my contract, reimbursement of my one-way flight to Korea from the United States is guaranteed in my contract, but I never received this reimbursement. In addition, the housing facilities guaranteed in my contract were not provided for over three months. During the interim months, I was provided substandard housing and was charged 10 times the normal price for utilities. Furthermore, my contract stipulates incentive bonuses that have never been accurately awarded.

There is also distinct favoritism for certain instructors and blatant mistreatment of instructors who are not favored by Korean staff. I have not been favored by Korean staff, and have been treated poorly throughout my employment with GIFLE. I have been denied the basic employee support that other instructors have received from Korean staff, such as aid in scheduling healthcare appointments and support for housing-related items such as utilities, cable

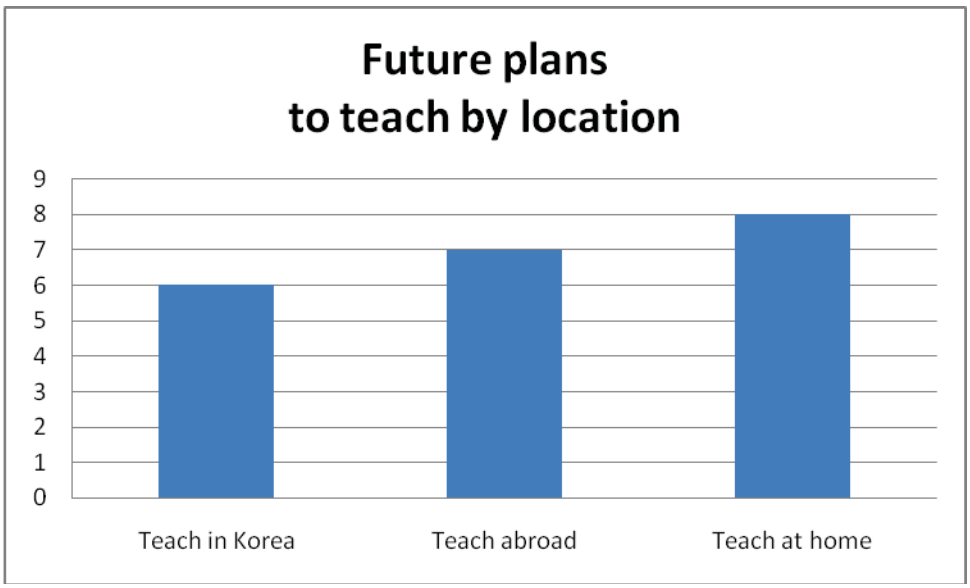
and faulty fixtures. In addition, I have been yelled at and been called an array of unflattering names by Korean staff and felt pressured to resign for no apparent reason.

At the same time, I have seen multiple instructors take the same action, such as being tardy, leaving early or being absent, and the responding disciplinary action by GIFLE has been inconsistently implemented. For example, two instructors failed to attend a GIFLE field trip. The favored instructor did not receive any disciplinary action. On the other hand, an unfavored instructor was docked pay for the day. In another instance, two instructors were tardy for class. The favored instructor, who missed an entire 90-minute lesson, was not disciplined. The unfavored instructor was publicly humiliated in front of other instructors and Korean staff via mass e-mail messages that communicated an offensively condescending tone toward this particular instructor. I believe this general lack of respect and fairness toward native English instructors has contributed to the 80% turnover rate over the past year..

Themes – Future plans



Graph 7



Graph 8

Regarding future plans, all instructors plan to continue teaching. Eight instructors plan to teach in their home countries and half of them hope to raise a family at home as well. Seven instructors are open to continue teaching abroad outside Korea while six instructors would consider teaching in Korea more in the future.

Instructor I plans to teach in Korea for a few more years for career advancement:

> "I'm trying to get a University position in Korea, ideally for a few years and then see how that goes. I think it's a good place to teach University for a few years at least to get experience teaching at a University… After that, maybe stay here longer if I'm really enjoying it and making some money."

This is Instructor B's second year teaching in Korea. Regarding future plans, Instructor B has decided not to continue teaching in Korea, saying:

> "Two years in Korea, I think, is enough…because Korea is…sort of insular. They don't think outside of the box a lot of the time and even though they're kind of

> fascinated by the rest of the world, being international, I don't think that they are that much."

Instructor H sheds some light on the decision to teach at home instead of continuing to teach in Korea:

> "I uprooted myself literally to make a difference to teachers. But sadly, I'm finding that that difference is not being used. And the information as a professional that I have to give is not being used, and that's one of the reasons why I'm leaving. And it's a sad thing to say that if I'm going to be this frustrated, I'd rather be frustrated in my own system at home…I feel like for a professional to come here, it could be a little bit of a waste of time unless the system keeps evolving a little better than it is now."

Other future plans include four instructors planning to continue their education and three instructors considering opening their own school. Three instructors may pursue different careers in addition to or instead of education in the future. For example, Instructor C states, "I'm a teacher and a musician…I'm hoping to graduate from being a teacher to being an artist full-time in the next 5 years, but I definitely teach as an artist also, to the best of my abilities."

Summary

In general, GIFLE instructors became educators because they enjoy teaching. At GIFLE, they have enjoyed training teachers, expanding their teaching skills, and working with other expatriate educators. On the other hand, majority of instructors did not choose to work in Korea out of a specific interest in the country or culture. Instead, they chose to work in Korea primarily due to compensation and referral factors. During their employment with GIFLE, they have faced many challenging experiences, particularly in dealing with Korean staff and culture. However, this has not deterred them

from a continued career in education. They view their experience at GIFLE as an important step in their educational career path.

Implications and limitations

I believe this research can inform others in the field, such as prospective and current expatriate educators, plus staff members of schools abroad. This study can forewarn prospective expatriate educators of the difficulties faced by living and working in South Korea. Current expatriate educators in South Korea can learn about the experience of training teachers at GIFLE to see if this or a similar institution would be a good fit for their career goals. For staff members of schools abroad, hopefully this study of motivations and experience will help them recruit new teachers and create a respectful atmosphere with their foreign instructors.

This research was limited by the fact that I only included instructors from one site. It is also limited in that the study was conducted during a short time period. Given the high turnover rate, a completely new group of instructors will be employed by GIFLE and their experiences may or may not be the same as reflected in this study.

I believe more research on expatriate education in South Korea is needed to create a more comprehensive illustration of this phenomenon. During the focus group, many instructors mentioned that a comparative study of the different types of expatriate educators would be very interesting. For example, this study could be duplicated for public elementary and secondary English teachers, plus private hakwon instructors, and university professors. Then, the data could be analyzed for major similarities and differences in the motivations of the different types of educators and their experiences in these different settings.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to shed light upon the phenomenon and experience of expatriate educators in South Korea. In questioning GIFLE instructors' background, motivations

and experience, this data shows that GIFLE instructors are a diverse group of expatriate educators, but they are committed to the education field and have attained high education levels. Working at GIFLE has been a great learning experience for their career advancement, but many instructors have experienced frustrations with GIFLE's management and underlying cultural differences.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Participant Name:_____Code Name for written Capstone_____

Nationality:_____Age Range: □ 20-24 □ 25-29 □ 30-34 □ 35-39 □ 40-44 □ 45-49 □ 50-54

Date of Interview:_____ Time:_____ Location: _____

One hour interviews will be scheduled with each of the 9 other instructors at GIFLE. Interviews will be recorded for reference. These questions will be distributed ahead of time so that subjects will have time to reflect upon their motivations. If subjects prefer to prepare by writing out their answers, they may do so, and submit the sheet to me during their interview. Prompting to seek more detailed or philosophical answers will be used. A follow-up interview may be scheduled, if further questions arise.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, your personal history, interests and goals.

2. What is your educational background?

3. What is your past teaching experience?

4. What motivated you to become an educator?

5. What motivated you to work in South Korea?

6. What motivated you to work at GIFLE?

7. What positive things have you gained from your teaching experience at GIFLE?

8. What has been the most difficult thing for you to deal with, in being here at GIFLE?

9. What are your plans for the future?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Western Governors University

MAT Elementary Education

Written Capstone

Nicolette Oliver

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by a MAT Elementary Education student from Western Governors University, Nicolette Oliver.

Description of the project:

Mrs. Nicolette Oliver is conducting research to determine the motivations of native English instructors in working at the Gyeonggido Institute for Foreign Language Education.

All native English instructors are expected to participate fully in all routine job responsibilities. In addition, they will be invited to participate in one-on-one interviews and/or focus groups with Nicolette Oliver.

Benefits and Risks of this study:

There will be no monetary benefits provided for your participation in this study.

No risks are expected.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be maintained, records will only be seen by the researcher, and all data that is reported will be aggregated. Aliases will be used in the final report to ensure anonymity of individual participants.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal:

Participants are expected to participate in any regular classroom instruction but may choose to voluntarily participate or withdraw from video or audio taping and interviews. Participants may withdraw at any time from non-regular classroom instruction and will not be penalized for non-participation.

Questions, Rights and Complaints:

Participants and legal guardians have a right to the results of the study. Participants or their legal guardians can contact the researcher via the following information:

Nicolette Oliver

<Street address>

<City, State, ZIP, Country>

<Telephone>

<Facsimile>

<E-mail>

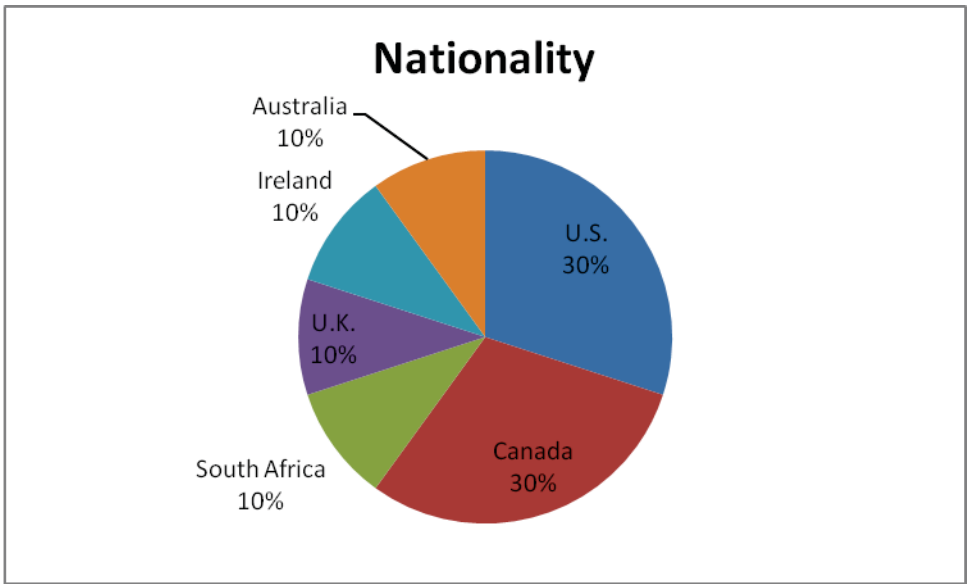
Consent statement:

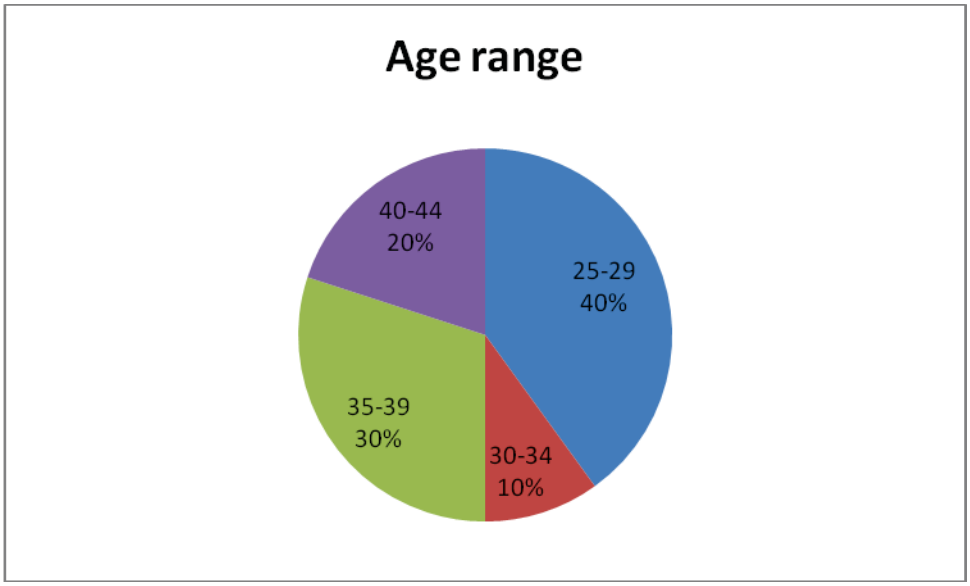
In signing this informed consent, participants and legal guardians agree to participate in the research, including interviews, focus groups, and observations

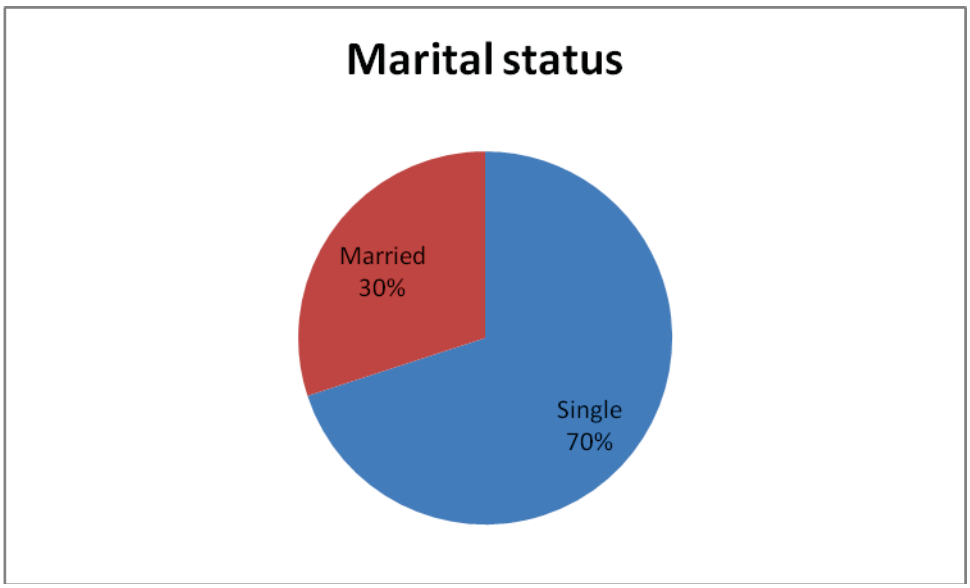
_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Signature of Legal Guardian
_____	_____
Typed/printed Name	Typed/printed Name
_____	_____
Date	Date

Appendix C

Demographic graphs






Marital status
Married
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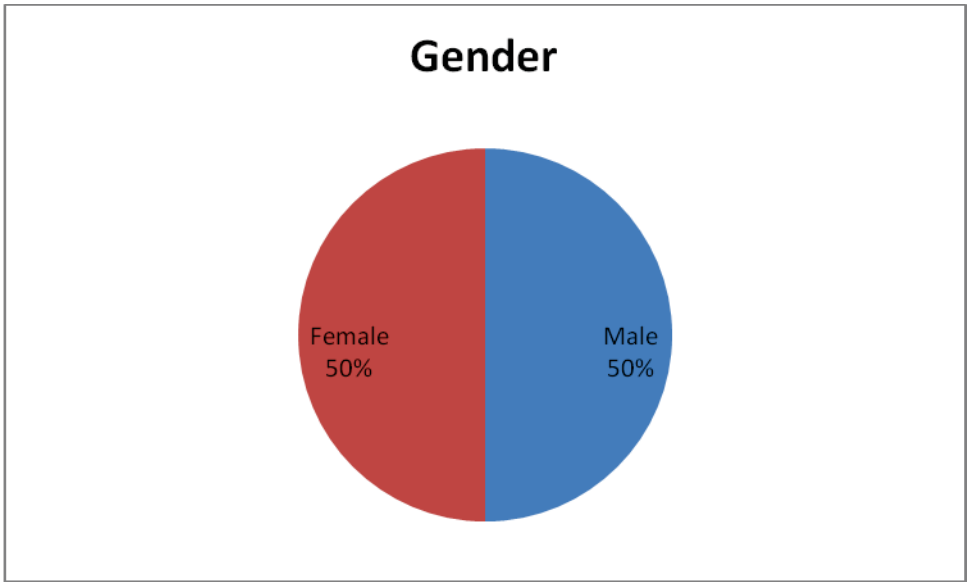
Single
70%


Gender
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Male
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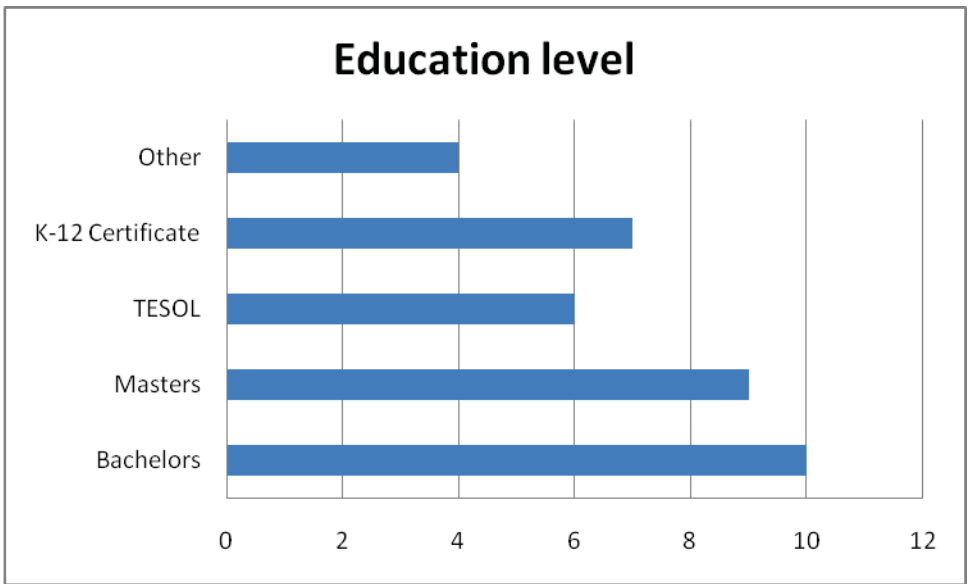
Education level
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TESOL
Masters
Bachelors
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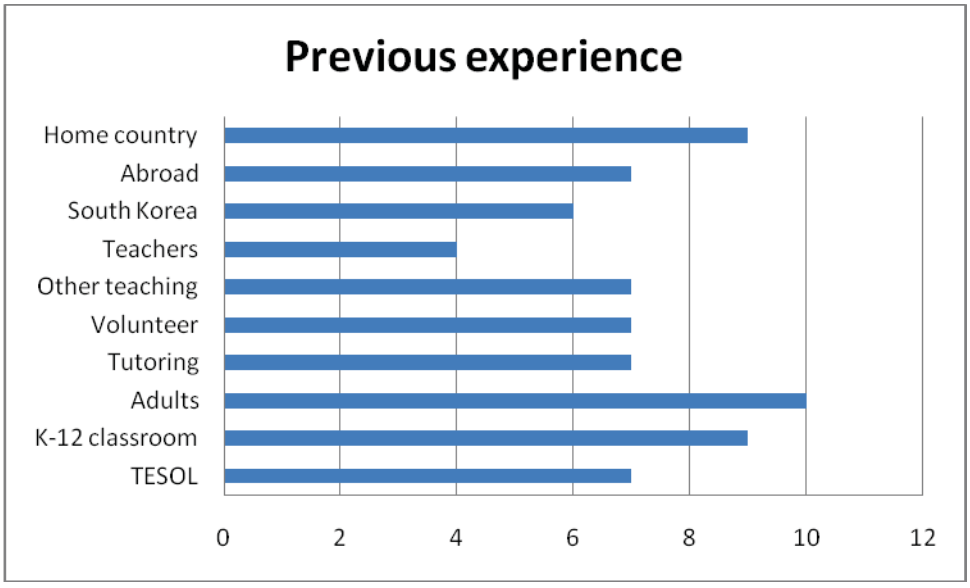
4
6
8
10
12


Previous experience
Home country
Abroad
South Korea
Teachers
Other teaching
Volunteer
Tutoring
Adults
K-12 classroom
TESOL
0
2
4
6
8
10
12

Appendix D

Focus group guide

1. Does the information in these graphs ring true to you?

2. Does anything surprise you about these graphs?

3. Is there anything unclear, or do you have questions about these graphs?

4. What do you think is the most important information presented in these graphs? Why?

5. Is there important information missing from this set of graphs?

6. What do you think people can learn from these graphs? For example, in-service educators, prospective educators, foreign schools, and/or recruiting agencies.