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1. Introduction

As the world globalizes, human resources management departments have evolved to deal with global workforces that need to foster intercultural communication and cross-cultural understanding. Many international organizations have presences in multiple countries and employees from a plethora of linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds. Where ever interaction takes place, power is present but the notion of power within organizations is a difficult and nuanced topic.

This study finds that international schools are an organizational environment that rely on a somewhat unique form of expert power – itself a complex term - which can result in clashes with local cultures. Using South Korea as a specific example, interviews with ten employees from different backgrounds and of different status were sought in order to make a link between the theoretical aspects of power within such organizations and the daily reality of the employees' lives.

The study found that there exists significant unhappiness and integration issues within international school work environments in South Korea which are mainly due to a lack of mutual understanding between Korean and overseas workers and the nature and organizational structure of international schools. The study makes recommendations for international schools and similar organizations that are applicable to South Korea but which may also be adapted to a wider audience.

2. Objectives and scope of the study

This paper seeks to address issues around power and resistance that occur on a daily basis in Korean international educational organizations, specifically international schools located in South Korea. The aim of the study is to find reasons for the related struggles of power and resistance that take place between expatriate and local staff in international schools within South Korea but that may also be applicable to other environments. The study is an attempt to bring together theoretical aspects of power and resistance in organizations and the practical daily experiences of a group of employees.

The study is limited in scope and draws from interviews with ten interviewees who work in international schools or similar entities within South Korea. The study aims to contribute to existing literature around international schools, cross-cultural organizations and inter-cultural communications with a specific focus on South Korea and the customs and cultural dimensions of working alongside Korean people or in a Korean context.

3. Literature review and Context

The idea of power in organizations is complex. As a result, the literature discussing the topic is vast and results in a plethora of definitions and understandings.

Theoretical perspectives of organizations and their leadership traditionally placed emphasis on both structure and strategy in guiding successful business operations. In studying dysfunction within international organizations, Barnett and Finnemore (1999) found little research into the day-to-day lives of the organizations as research placed greater emphasis on economic or political implications. Though cross-cultural interactions are nothing new (Magala, 2005), there has been more focus on them within business and organization research since the 1950s as rapid development in infrastructure and technology have made the world smaller and opened up all nations to the production and market opportunities of firms from all over the world, we have seen the interactions between people and organizations become increasingly complicated as we are exposed to other perspectives, technologies, cultures and understandings which may be very different from those that we have grown up with (Merchant, 2012; Morgan, 2014). This has been particularly important to human resource management, which has changed to incorporate the new multicultural makeup that is a hallmark of the organization in the modern world (Edwards and Rees, 2010; Yu et al., 2014).

Moua (2010) speaks of the increasing importance of culturally intelligent leadership in the modern world built around what Den Dekker (2016) calls a “global mindset” required by those entering the borderless world of international business and trade. Conversely, those with a “local

mindset” (Den Dekker, 2016) may see the cultural boundaries of the globalized world as barriers to be brought into line with those from their own country. The ability to navigate these intercultural waters require “transcultural competence” (Wildman et al, 2016). Magala (2005) warns against over-simplifying cross-cultural competence and reducing it to simply doing business with non-Western entities; it is far more complex. In highlighting the numerous factors involved in successful cross-cultural organizational leadership, Gelfand et al. (2007) draw attention to changes in cross-cultural organizational behaviours, for instance a shift from an old-fashioned expatriate attitude to one which requires closer attention to the local contexts.

International schools are expanding in number (Bunnell, 2017) and are, at their heart, a quintessential cross-cultural organization, ostensibly designed to build understanding between students of different backgrounds and cultures. However, paradoxically they have been unable to build some of the new human resources practices into their own development. This is a result of a need for them to hold on to the idea of the expert expatriate as staff members, whether that be teachers or leaders. However, like other international organizations in overseas contexts, they rely heavily on local staff for their day to day success. A typical international school will employ locals in a variety of roles from office administration, transport, cleaning and catering. As these two groups come together, employees experience a meeting of different worlds, which can cause as much confusion and misunderstanding as it can be a reason for celebration. Bailey (2015) found that culture clashes were one of the biggest learning curves for expatriates in new positions at international schools and Bunnell (2017), similarly, found status confusion for expat teachers in overseas contexts. Although the expanded role of international schools includes customers who are not necessarily expatriates themselves (Hayden, 2006), it can be argued that

the organizational structures and norms are still similar to those which were set up many years ago when international schools existed to primarily serve a small community of other expatriates.

3.1 Power in organizations

The study of power within organizations is complex and can involve different foci. For the purpose of this study, we are interested in power and resistance within cross-cultural organizations, specifically within a South Korean context.

Defining power is difficult. For Singh (2009) power is simply defined as “the ability to get things done the way one wants them to be done”. With this, there comes an inevitable trade-off within organizations when two or more people want different things to be done in different ways. At the most basic level, power is in the hands of the people who are able to make such decisions and, in turn, make others do what needs to be done. Power is “at the heart of all social relationships” and is “integral...to groups and individuals in organizations” (Courpasson & Golsorkhi, 2011). For Tjosvold and Wisse (2009) power is “the ability to affect outcomes”. Related to power is the concept of resistance. Resistance may be formed for a number of reasons and Courpasson and Dany (2009) identify four frameworks for resistance that impact on organizations. Firstly, resistance may be an act of re-appropriation. Secondly, it may be an act of micro-politics. Thirdly, resistance can be a hegemonic struggle and fourthly, a part of a social movement. They go on to say that frequently acts of resistance are hybridizations of these four models.

Power and resistance are thus often opposing forces and yet we need both sides in order to make sense of the overall power dynamic in the organization. Resistance might be seen “as the process by which power structures and relationships are modified, altered and power bested.”

(Courpasson and Dany, 2009, p.337). Importantly, this distinction makes the act of resistance a form of power in itself. For Fleming and Spicer (2007), resistance is categorized into four forms: resistance as refusal, voice, escape and creation. For the purposes of this study, power (which includes the notion of resistance) is the extent to which individuals within the organization can influence the direction of the organization, both in the long term and on a day-to-day basis.

In dividing power bases into two distinct groups, Singh (2009) speaks of forms of power that rely on formal authority, such as rules, systems and hierarchies and those which rely on individual competence and qualities, such as expert power or reciprocal power. For Fleming and Spicer (2007), four areas of power are identified: power as coercion, power as manipulation, power as domination and power as subjectification. In attempting to make connections between the theoretical definitions of power and resistance, we can say that Fleming and Spicer (2007) hold a negative view of power in which all forms of power are an act that takes place *against* the employee in some manner. Moreover, they believe that his inevitable despotism must be met with some form of resistance. The result is organizational struggle: a battle between power and resistance within the organization. Table 1 shows how the types of power, resistance and struggle play out.

Table 1 – Power, resistance and struggle (adapted by author from Fleming and Spicer, 2007)

Type of Power	Type of Resistance	Struggle
Coercion <i>Formal, fixed ways of doing things; changes must be followed</i>	Refusal <i>Inaction; continuing old ways.</i>	Around action <i>Task completion, etc.</i>
Manipulation <i>Lack of consultation and involvement in decision process</i>	Voice <i>Employees wish to speak out</i>	Around inactivity <i>Not on what should be done but about a lack of inclusion</i>
Domination <i>Organization takes over one's life</i>	Escape <i>Cynicism, skepticism, disengagement</i>	Around interests <i>Whether organizations interests or own interests are paramount</i>
Subjectification <i>The identity of workers is changed to suit that of the organization</i>	Creation <i>Create an alternative to what the organization expects</i>	Around identity <i>Workers fear a loss of identity or control and then push back</i>

Singh (2009) looks at the dynamic from a less theoretical standpoint and offers practical aspects that one may use in daily organizational life. For Singh (2009), power, when used correctly, has the capacity to be both positive and transformational.

Singh (2009) equates better organizational health and performance with relationship-based management styles that use expert or reciprocal power. Global human resources practices emphasize relationships and cultural understanding as keys to developing successful international organizations (Dowling et al, 2013). However, closer examination of expert power leads us to discover two diverging concepts. Firstly, we have Singh's notion of the expert as one with expertise who can guide the organization via specialist knowledge, which relates closely to

the form of the expatriate in the international school environment. Secondly, we have Kudisch et al.(1995) who propose the idea of an expert who is a charismatic leader focused on relationships and able to “instill confidence in subordinates”. Huber (1999) hints at the dangers of the expert within the organization as one who sees themselves as an expert and therefore the only one who seems qualified to make decisions. This might be framed both positively and negatively. When a decision requires specialist knowledge, it is good to have the expertise on hand to be able to make the correct decision. However, in maintaining a hold on the specialist knowledge, the expert is exhibiting an individualistic perspective toward knowledge that might otherwise be shared with others to the benefit of the organization.

Maner and Mead (2010) put forward the idea that leaders sometimes will act against the group hierarchy in favour of protecting their own positions, often when they feel threatened themselves over their own positions. Thus, power in this sense is flexible and may be given to the organization or the group in times of plenty but withdrawn from the group or organization when the leader feels it is to their own advantage. This can be linked to the idea of a leader with expertise who may choose to keep essential knowledge to his or herself with a view to maintaining power.

The dynamics involved within international schools and similar international organizations are most likely to involve expert power, for example, the expatriate brought in as an expert in their field. However, critically, whilst some organizations have been able to move towards a more harmonious model of globalized human resources management in which expats and local workers enjoy more equal status (Dowling et al., 2013), international schools have been unable

to follow suit and are, to some extent, trapped in an old-fashioned model of organizational structure which only serves to promote struggles of power and resistance within the organization. This outdated model is fully open to criticism along lines of postcolonial and critical management theories which maintain that such reliance serves a Western hegemony and act in the same way as colonists would towards territory and people (Prasad et al., 2016). In this sense, we are witnessing power as domination. Although the international school is located in a foreign country, as far as organizational norms and practices go, it is a sovereign state that operates under its own norms – and imposes them on those who are within the sovereign state - under a Westphalian model (Drori et al., 2006).

3.2 Postcolonialism and Critical Management Theory

Critical management theory is “a distinctly critical orientation involving, among other things, a recognition of and a focus upon the centrality of power, conflict and interests in organizational/institutional life, as well as a commitment to providing an ethico-politically engaged appraisal of their consequences.” (Prasad et al., 2016)

Using a critical management theory perspective, Prasad (2003b) traces international organizational power back to colonialism. In its original guise, colonial power was overt and used a model made popular by the English and French in seizing territory overseas and subjecting it to their own customs and laws. However, more recently a more covert economic hegemony has infiltrated international interactions, regulated by organizations such as the World Trade Organization and World Bank, which critical management theorists believe to be

neocolonial in nature (Prasad, 2003b; Durokifa and Ijeoma, 2018). Postcolonialism is “the generic term that captures...the assumption that the colonial period is historically over but continues in new colonial forms, framing our understanding of the West and the Rest” (Vinthagen, 2017).

Linking both traditional colonial practice and neocolonial traits is the notion of culturalization. When we impose or inflict our own cultural norms on others internationally, we are guilty of culturalization. Whereas, for example, in imperial times this may have looked more oppressive and those not bowing to the will of the colonial powers may have been subject to, for example, legal consequences, a more modern take on this phenomenon takes place in offices around the world on a daily basis. When two (or more) cultures meet in international organization there is, at some level, a power struggle taking place. This may be something as seemingly innocuous as a simple greeting: a handshake or the way one says hello. However, even something as innocuous as hand gestures can mean different things in different cultures and contexts. For example, South Koreans bow when meeting rather than shaking hands; a handshake in certain contexts might be considered rude. Moreover, South Korea has a complex system of hierarchy which means that there are different ways of addressing people of different hierarchical levels. A mistake in doing so, even when saying hello, can result in negative first impressions or worse. For Ulus (2015) the idea of ‘Otherness’ – seeing others as different from yourself as a starting point is rooted in postcolonial organizations. She identifies subversion and ambivalence as forms of resistance in postcolonial organizations as a means by which people can hold on to some power.

Such intercultural connections have increased as a result of globalization and organizations, business and management theory and practices have scrambled to keep pace with the rapid rise of misunderstandings and frustrations that can come about as companies become grounds for the interaction of global citizens. Tied to this are concepts of power. When one custom, language or cultural norm takes priority over another, we may consider this to be an indication that one is more powerful than the other. There can be confusion in Korean-Western interactions when parties are unclear what is expected or how to act. This can be a source of shame or embarrassment for South Koreans (Kohls, 2001) but conversely, we can make an argument from another perspective that in showing politeness or respect to another culture's norm, ground has been given in terms of the power relationship between the two parties.

It is possible to see that a critical management stance would see inherent unfairness in the models used in international schools and similar organizations. The use of overseas experts echoes strongly the models of colonial and postcolonial practices in undermining the local cultures and practices. However, a more positive slant has been put forth by others (Fechter & Walsh, 2010) who argue in favour of expats and locals working closely together in a process of mutual learning which benefits society and organizations. Den Dekker (2016) acknowledges both ends of the spectrum when discussing whether companies should pursue the expatriate manager in firstly stating that it is often about control of overseas operations but adding that part of the role is to train local staff and prepare them for managerial roles. In fact, there has been more emphasis placed on reducing the gaps between local and overseas employees in much of the human resources literature, for example, some companies have introduced local-expatriate contracts that help to lower costs and offer more fairness between locals and expat employees

(Dowling et al., 2013, p.305). It is worth noting however that international schools may be unique in that families using their services expect overseas employees to be the main teachers and leaders and therefore there is little similarity to other overseas organizations who may be in the process of training locals to take over roles but this does not preclude local staff being given access to up-to-date practices and methods, which can be seen as an example of positive interaction in the process. Although Drori et al. (2006) discuss the rapid evolution of human resources practices in international firms during the time of globalization as moving to:

“networking rather than hierarchical structure, experimentation and learning rather than command structures, cross-sector and cross-firm fertilization rather than innate expertise, and flexibility rather than career trajectory” (p.15)

International schools are not seeing such rapid change and are still stuck in an old-fashioned, and, arguably, postcolonial model.

3.3 Power and organizations in a cross-cultural context

Clegg et al. (2006) propose that power is linked to efficiency and control within an organization. In the modern era, this has come to mean different things: when thinking of power, for example, we may consider labour relations or financial comparisons. Moreover, at the time when House (1991) gave us a distinction between mechanistic organizations which concentrate their power in leadership at the top and organic organizations which distribute leadership throughout the organization, cultural aspects were not factored in. As we begin to revisit power research and

studies, we are now able to add to these ideas with cultural considerations. In cross-cultural organizations, whilst the founding concepts of power are present, another layer is added – this includes aspects of culture, customs and habits (Den Dekker, 2016). Daily collaboration with those from different cultures can be both a means of increased efficiency or profit or may mean frustration and misunderstandings. Coleman and Ferguson (2014) believe that despite the many negative connotations around the many nuanced understandings of power within organizations, any conflict can be used for good and be of a benefit to the organization. Organizational and individual concepts of power may vary from culture to culture and firms working in cross-cultural contexts will need to build in strategic consideration to the multi-faceted understandings of power that will exist across a global organization. This new focus on the development relationships and understanding within the complexity of international interactions ties in with the findings of Bal et al. (2008) who discovered that the power of relationships was considered to be the greatest source of power in effective leadership. Interestingly, both modern human resources management and Korean culture place great emphasis upon relationships but within the international school context in South Korea, there has been something lost in the meeting of these two similar ideas. This may rest with the realization that international schools are unable to follow modern human resources practices whilst necessarily holding on to the idea of the expatriate expert in an organizational context that places importance on practices consistent with those in the West for families that wish to pursue further studies there in the future.

As human resources management develops within a more globalized context, there is now a greater focus on socio-cultural elements and a need for empathetic and relationship focused leaders who are able to bring together people from many backgrounds and walks of life (Moua,

2016; Luster and Koestig, 2010). Interestingly, Jack and Lorbiecki (2003) maintain that the cross-cultural training and initiatives have themselves been infiltrated by a structuralist functionalist agenda operating along neocolonial lines. Similarly, Mir et al. (2003) argue that “incorporating local knowledge into global knowledge and then discrediting local knowledge” is a common practice in globalized organizations. However, others (Tzafrir, 2005) emphasize the reciprocal nature of the relationships and understandings developing as a result of a more cross-cultural shift within organizations. Zhou (2017) and Zheng et al. (2017) both accentuate the positive role that an expatriate leader can have in transformational leadership of a cross-cultural organization.

As Selmer (2016, p.14), highlights: “inadequate cross-cultural understanding and intercultural abilities inhibit the expatriate executives’ adaption of their leadership style to local norms and practices.” This has led organizations to adopt a dual management structure where local managers with relevant cultural understanding work alongside expatriate leaders in controlling the organization. Selmer (2016) shows us that this impacts negatively on employee perceptions of the leaders.

The literature reveals that cross-cultural leadership is a popular area for research and theorizing but still has a number of practical limitations. When one is on the ground in a new country without knowledge of the language and culture of people who one is leading, expatriates can find it difficult to lead (Selmer, 2016; Benson, 2011) in the same way as they may be accustomed in their home environment. To this extent, talk of building relationships and inclusive practice can be of limited practical use and may be why many organizations employ a dual leader system that

allows expatriates to use their own expert knowledge whilst another manager handles affairs that require linguistic and cultural skills. The obvious trade-off under this system is that it creates the very gap between local and expatriate staff and/or leadership which is the target of the cross-cultural management movement.

3.4 International schools as specific organizational entities

The rise of the international school and international education organizations has been a steady trend over the last two decades (Hayden, 2006) and shows no signs of letting up. Educational organizations operating in South Korea will need to successfully bring together cultures from their host countries and the cultural traits and social conditioning that their communities carry with them when they move to the school to work or study. Amongst others, Bailey (2015) and Bunnell (2017) have discussed issues around local and expatriate culture and integration in the international school environment, finding that there are significant differences in understandings within the organizations. Busher (2006) has stated that schools are unique organizations with complex systems of micro-politics and culture that dictate power flow within them. It might be said that adding the international context to this complex system will increase the complexities involved. Benson (2011) hints at cultural differences as a key factor in chief administrator turnover at international schools and, similarly, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) found cultural misunderstandings or differences contribute to teacher turnover in international schools. In Korean higher education institutions, the great degree of importance placed upon Confucian values impacts upon the organizational culture of the institution and impacts upon the

perceptions of leadership, with links to the power and employee satisfaction within the organization (Lee, 2001).

One may argue that international schools are one of the organizational entities that Prasad et al. (2016) refer to when stating that the West has waged war on the world's heterogeneous systems of knowledge production. It might be said that international schools exist to expand the Western ideal of knowledge and schooling throughout the world (Cambridge, 2011) and thus it can be argued that a postcolonial agenda exists within the establishment of international schools themselves. In the eyes of critical scholars such as Prasad et al. (2016) and Mignolo (2011): "Control of knowledge, thus, has long served as one of the key building blocks of the 'colonial matrix of power' that undergirds Western modernity and modern Western civilization." (Prasad et al, 2016, p.6)

Entering the world of international schools, we find many similarities with multicultural organizations in other sectors. Workers from different backgrounds and cultural understandings interact and collaborate with one another on a daily basis. A variety of spoken languages might be used but usually one language serves as the overall lingua franca of the organization. The schools selected for this project all use English as their chosen language of operation. However, there is a very clear distinction between expatriate and local staff along the lines of expertise. This may be seen as necessary in that school leaders and teachers are overseas-trained teachers but this can also clearly be seen to be a fault line in the making in attempts to map the power dynamics within the organizations. Advocates of educational change and distributed leadership, such as Hallinger and Heck, 2009, cite results based around a sharing of responsibility and a

building of capacity with mid-level employees as a means of improving student attainment levels. It is necessary to note that when leadership is distributed in international school contexts it is usually between expatriate leaders and expatriate employees and local staff are rarely considered in the equation.

International schools may represent a unique sector within the gamut of international organizations. They are essentially forced to maintain the expatriate expert power model as their core business relies heavily on the fact that the leaders and teachers are just that: experts in the educational models put forth by, largely, Western nations. This serves as a marketing factor in families selecting the schools (Holmes, 2018). Both the expatriate community themselves and the local families choosing schools are more likely to do so if the teachers and leaders are expatriate experts themselves (Holmes, 2014).

International schools are also somewhat unique in that they turnover their staff very frequently (Odland and Ruzicka, 2009). This results in a lack of stability and too many change initiatives which can become wearisome (Reeves, 2009) for those who have to undergo many changes should they stay at the school for a long time. Invariably, the longer-term employees are either local or localized expatriates (Bunnell, 2016).

International schools share an organizational structural formation that can work in global contexts. The expatriate expert acts as an overall leader, he or she is supported by a local leader who is charged with overseeing local staff more directly (Selmer, 2016) . From a practical standpoint this makes sense. The local leader will, in all likelihood, be more familiar with local

laws, customs and practices. However, it is also another method by which international schools create potential for disharmony as immediately there exists a power struggle between two leaders. Even though on an organizational chart, the expatriate expert exists above the local leader this may not always be apparent to local staff, who may be uncertain who to approach with different issues. In a Korean context, this is made more difficult because of the notion of hierarchical relationships discussed below.

3.5 The complexities of power within Korean organizations

South Korean people offer both subtle and more obvious differences in their cultural backgrounds that influence the way in which they interact with those from other countries and cultures. Leaders and managers working with colleagues from South Korea will need a grasp of different mindsets and customs that permeate daily life (Cho and Yoon 2010; Lee, 2001; De Mente, 2017) in order to successfully navigate the journey through the organizational landscape of these diverse countries. Educational organizations have grown by a large number in South Korea over the last two decades and this has resulted in more research being needed on the interactions between South Koreans and those from elsewhere. Hofstede's cultural dimension analysis displays significant differences between South Korea and, for a Western example, the United Kingdom in a range of areas, indicating that there is a learning process necessary for both sides when people from the West and South Korea work together. To offer an example: South Korean organizations are very traditional and hierarchical in structure with great importance placed on the ages of the collaborators in a group. This is vital in understanding how to

contribute and speak within the group. Thus, a simple task to work in a small group with colleagues on a project – a relatively straightforward undertaking in a Western organization – becomes a nuanced and complex problem as Korean staff begin to calculate the age, experience and social position of those involved before being able to make any contribution (Kohls, 2001). This, and similar examples, serve to highlight the complexity of power and influence within organizations in South Korea and how these intricacies might play out in cross-cultural organizations.

Diagram 1 - South Korea, Hofstede Analysis Chart (Hofstede, 2019)

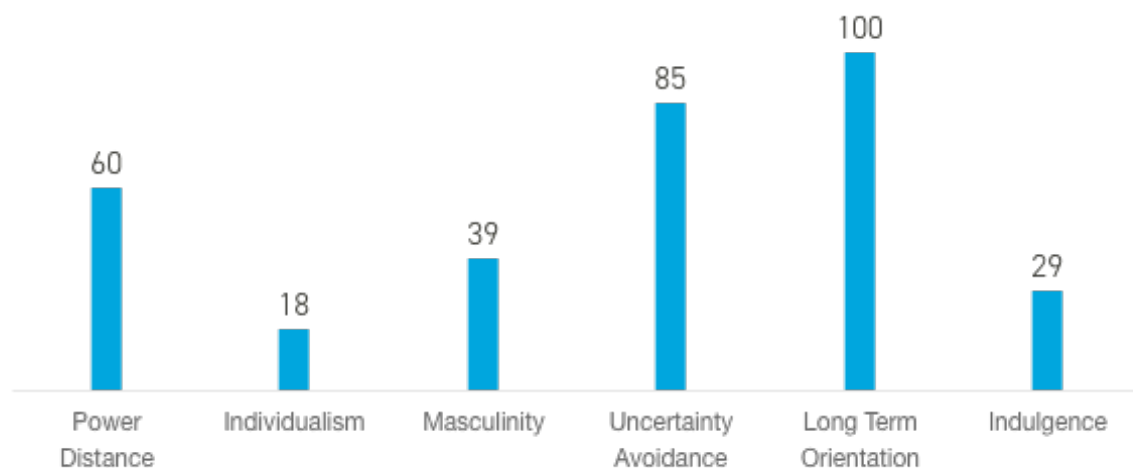


Diagram 1 shows us that South Korean society and culture score very highly in both long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. This can be translated as a society that prefers to work slowly on projects and be sure of getting things right rather than a more fluid and dynamic company atmosphere, where one learns by making mistakes and quickly moving on. The power distance score indicates a relatively high rate of hierarchy and this is in line with the respect that must be shown to those of a higher social ranking and older age. There are low scores for

individualism and indulgence which correspond to the limited amounts of freedom and individuality in Korean society.

Cho and Yoon suggest the term “dynamic collectivism” for the structure of Korean organizations. To some degree, their study serves to emphasize the difference between a Western mentality and a Korean one. Where a Western mindset, focused on efficiency, will set up a lean organizational structure and set of business practices, a Korean organization will take into account cultural factors before the organizational structure and business practices are put into place, believing that without the necessary forethought will result in a lack of harmony. Harmony or *kibun* (Cho and Yoon, 2010) is an important concept in Korean culture. From this concept, Koreans will do nothing that will upset the harmony of their inner circle or the leaders of the organization.

The strict hierarchical nature of Korean organizational and societal structures is highly relevant to this study. In the mind of Korean people, the notions of harmony and hierarchy are intrinsically linked. This comes from the Confucian ideal that believes that without a hierarchical order, in which all know their place, there can be no harmony (Lee, 2012). Koreans are reminded of this in daily interactions as the Korean language incorporates respectful or honorific forms of verb endings which must be used with superiors or those who are older than oneself or who may be outside of one’s ingroup (De Mente, 2017).

Korea is thus a collectivist mindset which means low individualistic freedom and more importance on group harmony. For Koreans, this specifically means the ingroup, or inner circle,

which are family and close friends and acquaintances. Once a Korean ingroup is established it is hard for it to be broken or infiltrated. A Korean person's loyalty will always be to the ingroup and the hierarchy. The harmony of the group is of paramount importance and the Korean mindset will usually think in terms of the 'we' rather than the more individualistic idea of 'I', which is more associated with a Western mindset (Lee, 2012). For instance, South Korea scores very low in individuality in the Hofstede (2019) comparisons.

Kohls (2001) has also highlighted the difference between a Confucian 'shame' culture and a Judeo-Christian 'guilt' culture, arguing that Western cultures emphasize feelings of guilt in people who stray from norms whereas Confucian societies bring people up to feel shame should a particular behaviour be exposed. For Kohls, the committing of an act by Koreans may not necessarily induce anxiety within that person, even if seen doing so. However, once revealed to others within the organization, there would be a sense of shame or loss of face. This is particularly interesting when we factor in the fact that South Korea has a high rate of Christians and so it may be possible to consider that many people are faced with conflicting inner dialogues about their actions when traditional Korean culture and Christian values clash (De Mente , 2017).

Importantly, South Koreans will also place a great deal of importance on long term thinking (Hofstede, 2019) which can have implications for international organizations. In a constantly changing business environment where one may need to be flexible and dynamic, it can sometimes be difficult to state with any great certainty what the future will look like. However, this can be construed in a negative light if we consider that modern organizations consider a slow

and safe pace to lack competitiveness (Brewster et al., 2018) and are looking for their staff to be more dynamic. South Koreans may frustrate those from the West who are committed to this way of thinking.

Finally, both Cho and Yoon (2010) and De Mente (2017) mention the difficulties that Koreans have in communicating with those who are not members of their inner circle or who are foreigners. This can lead to increased misunderstandings and confusion which may impact on the organization. In this case of international schools, Koreans are often forced to deal with overseas members of staff who are outside of their inner circle and so we can say that communication may be a factor in power struggles within Korean international schools.

3.6 Overarching concept of power

From the areas identified in this section, it is possible to see both the complexities that researching the notion of power can bring but we can also identify common factors in the power dynamic within cross-cultural organizations in a Korean context. We can state that Western organizations, such as international schools, have traditionally come to rely more on expert forms of power, that manifest in a more formal manner than may have been envisaged, possibly with postcolonial agendas and that there exists a tension between the norms in which Western expatriates operate and the cultural norms and values of Koreans.

Singh's (2009) positive notion of expert power may have been distorted into a more coercive form of power and from Table 1, we can identify that resistance as refusal is a likely outcome

and the ensuing struggle will take place around task completion. We can also identify that manipulative power may be a factor when one relies on experts, although the predicted response from Fleming and Spicer (2007) – voice as resistance – is unlikely in a Korean cultural context, where maintaining silence is held as a virtue. It is more likely that resistance would take other forms.

In seeking to draw out the day to day experience of some of the actors involved in these scenarios, interviews were conducted as a means of collecting qualitative data.

4. Interviews and Data Analysis

4.1 Methodology

Interviews with a number of people, both expatriate and Korean, were sought. The interviewees were drawn from a range of positions both in terms of hierarchy and breadth of role. This was an attempt to offer balance to the study. In total, I carried out ten interviews, five with Korean staff and five with expatriate staff. Three expatriates were leaders in educational organizations, two were leaders in non-educational contexts. Four of the five Korean interviewees were administrative staff and one was in a leadership role. It is important to note that all interviews were conducted in English and it should be born in mind that for some of the interviewees this is a second language, which could impact on the data gathered. However, the organizational lingua

franca at all of the institutions is English and so all interviewees can be considered to have a good working knowledge of the language.

By drawing from a range of sources, it can be argued that the interviews might offer richer data than if drawing interviewees from a narrower context. The interviews were essentially unstructured interviews. Although, more structured or semi-structured interviews can offer flexibility whilst maintaining a degree of similarity, in this context, it was deemed that unstructured interviews would be a better method in extracting information around a sensitive topic. For instance, the unstructured interview can feel more like a casual chat or friendly conversations (Seidman, 2006) and allow the interviewee to feel at ease with the conversation. To this end, the interviews were not recorded but I made notes as answers were given. Although this method offers some advantages, we can also identify some drawbacks.

Dawson (2002) notes that unstructured interviews offer the chance to delve into people's lives and gather rich data. It is worth noting that this form of interviewing requires the interviewer and interviewee to have a rapport and trust needs to be established (Dawson, 2002). To this end, it can be argued that when dealing with a sensitive and potentially emotive topic such as power in a workplace context, sensitivity and trust are key to a successful interview. Thus, unstructured interviews may be the most effective approach and were deemed to be the correct choice for this project. Bell (2014) highlights the importance of a framework and boundaries when working in this research method and this was established clearly with interviewees in framing the conversations around power. If interviewees began to take a tangent that was too far away from the focus of the study, I guided them back to the focus. Interestingly, Newby (2014) argues

against using a framework with this method and encourages allowing participants to expand as they wish. Whilst this is a possible means of gathering richer data, there needs to be a practical balance in terms of time taken for the interview and the amount of relevant data that can be collected. Thus, on occasion and if I felt the interviewee's conversation thread might lead to something important, I allowed them to digress. However, if I felt that the thread was not leading anywhere, I might choose to redirect the topic with a question. For example, when one interviewee began discussing a personal gripe with a former manager, I tried to redirect this towards the power dynamic over her personal feelings. This method would correlate with the topic guide approach proposed by Robinson and Segrott (2002), where although interviewers are unable to change the ideas of the interviewee, resulting in bias, interviewers can keep track of areas of conversation that they wish to stick to and steer the conversation away from topics outside of these areas.

In noting potential issues, Seidman (2006) points out that some interviewees may be unused to speaking at length around open-ended questions or discussion and this can cause discomfort. In easing possible discomfort, it was made clear to the participants that the conversation would be anonymous. Bell (2014) reminds us of the differences between anonymity and confidentiality, stating that confidentiality reminds us that readers will not be able to identify the person speaking from their answers, whereas anonymity means the researcher themselves will be unable to be sure who gave which answers. In this case, the interviews can therefore only be considered confidential and not anonymous.

Note-taking can be problematic in that it can open up the data to interviewer bias when taking down the notes or in selecting what is recorded and what isn't. However, as Wellington (2015) makes clear, there are similar issues associated with transcribing the recording of interviews in that researchers can also be drawn into bias in selecting what is finally taken down. Making sense of notes can be time consuming but this is also true of transcribing data from a recorded interview. One issue encountered was that I found that being engaged in the interview and conversations with the interviewee was not conducive to voluminous note taking and when coming to then write up the findings, I had to work from key notes which may have potentially missed some of what an interviewee said. A second issue from taking notes is that the gist or overall tone of the speaker's argument may be lost in taking down the key points. To counter this, I tried to add notes that captured the tone or emotions of the interviewee as well as their words in order to build a richer picture of the data gathering process. Thirdly, note-taking may be seen as suspicious (Coughlin and Brannon, 2005) and put interviewees into a more defensive state of mind. When starting the interviews, I reiterated that the notes were just for my own purposes and the confidential nature of their comments. The notes were also labelled with anonymous identifiers, e.g. Interview 4 rather than with the name of the interviewee. This served to both set the interviewee at ease and to anonymize the notes in case others saw them.

When interviewing in your own organization, it can be difficult to separate the internal politics and relationships from the research project (Coughlin & Brannon, 2005). Although some interviewees were from organizations outside of my own, I also interviewed several members of staff, both Korean and expatriate from my own school. To this end, I explained to the interviewees who were also colleagues that the information gathered would be used only for the project and that it was anonymous and that any internal conflicts or information would be kept

apart from the daily life of the school. However, it is unlikely that all interviewees felt that they could be completely honest and say entirely what they wished to given the relationships and politics that exist in the organization. Coughlin and Brannon (2005) highlight that if a leader is gathering data from a subordinate for a research project within an organization, then consideration needs to be given to using a third party as a data gatherer. In this instance, this was unfeasible. Instead, I chose to interview people who worked in other areas of the organization and who had little or no daily interactions with me, considering this the most likely means by which I would gather more honest, and therefore richer, data. However, it is necessary to state, that there remains a danger that people from within the organization were not completely open. Conversely, this can be also be a concern to those interviewees from outside the organization, who may not wish to reveal any flaws or issues from within their own contexts to the outside world.

Interviews were either conducted in person or, in one case, over the telephone. I tried to create as formal an environment as possible in order to highlight the importance of the process to the study. This was particularly important within my own organization where a boundary was drawn between a casual chat and the data gathering process for the research project. Locations for the face to face interviews varied from offices to classrooms depending on the availability of interviewees.

4.2 Analysis and Findings

Dawson (2002) reminds us that “qualitative data analysis is a very personal process” (p.110) and that researchers’ interpretations add to the study but may also bias the study towards their own political or personal point of view. Importantly, she also reminds us that qualitative and quantitative data analysis are two separate entities and comparison of the methods is essentially fruitless. In deciding how to analyse the data that was gathered, consideration was given to a number of methods suitable for qualitative data.

Content analysis borrows from more quantitative methods to codify the data gathered in the interview process. In this type of analysis, we are looking to find similarities in the data and attempt to find common themes or threads. In this instance, it was possible to conduct a content analysis of the interview notes in order to seek out common themes across the interviewees’ responses. The coding process is integral to the success of a content analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Within content analysis, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) have identified three distinct methods that researchers might utilize in their approach to content analysis: traditional, summative and directed. Using a traditional method, the researcher draws the codes from the interviews themselves, whereas with a directed approach, the codes are drawn-up beforehand, for example from a theoretical standpoint and then answers are placed into the predetermined categories. The summative method makes use of keywords that are identified both before and during the interview process. In this instance, a traditional approach was adopted as it is argued that an

unstructured and open approach to the interviews precludes the creation of categories or keywords before the commencement of the process. In this sense, the interviews allowed for shifts in direction and content, which ultimately adds to the richness of the data.

Other methods suited to qualitative methods include discourse or conversational analysis (Dawson, 2002), which involves analysis of speech patterns, participation in the conversation, and other factors that act behind the words being spoken. A mixed-methods approach towards analysis allows the researcher to make use of various analytical structures. In this case, although content analysis via word coding can be said to be the primary method of analysis, notes were also taken about the interviewees demeanour and behaviour during the process in order to add to the final analysis. This can be considered to be a form of discourse analysis where gaps in speech or pauses may be significant in the responses of the interviewees. For instance, Dick (2005) points out how a particular discourse may influence interviewee responses and create bias in the study.

Although there are technological tools available to help researchers with content analysis, in this instance the small scale of the project meant that there weren't sufficient grounds to make use of the software and instead analysis was done solely by the researcher.

In analyzing the results of the interviews through coding, the results were grouped as follows:

Table 2 – Identified themes

<i>Key points/themes</i>	<i>Number of interviews that referenced</i>
Korean culture and (mis)understandings	8
Cross-cultural organizations and communication	7
Dichotomy of roles of foreign and Korean staff	6
Anger, frustration, unhappiness	6
Resistance to change	5
Trust	5

The table shows all of the times that a theme or point came out across all of the interviews more than three times. Where a point only came out three or fewer times over the ten interviews, the topic was deemed to be insignificant for the purposes of this study.

Overall, the interviews offered up the broad themes that are shown in Table 2. Coding within content analysis requires the researcher to identify themes and classify them accordingly where there may not be the same language used from interview to interview (Seidman, 2006).

My approach to this task was to find similarities between the comments made and classify accordingly. For instance, when one interviewee spoke of “foreigners not understanding the local culture” and another spoke of “[Koreans] don’t understand how it is supposed to work”, this was determined to be two sides of the same theme: misunderstandings around Korean culture, and these two comments were codified accordingly. Where comments referred to more general organizational differences, and Korean culture wasn’t specifically mentioned, this was coded using the cross-cultural organization code. These two themes were the most common findings from the interviews. A large part of the conversations took place around the grey areas that form the gap between theoretical constructs of cross-cultural organizations and intercultural

communication, and the realities of daily life in organizations with a mixture of nationalities, backgrounds and cultural norms, some of which were specific to Korea. Interviewees showed various emotions during the course of the interviews around these two areas, including anger, frustration and sadness.

As the table shows, six interviewees expressed directly that they felt this way about a situation or situations at work. One interview in particular became quite emotional as the Korean interviewee expressed frustration at the lack of empathy foreigners showed towards Korean culture. This in itself raised an issue as to whether me being foreign to Korea was a cause of bias in the study. It cannot be stated with a degree of certainty that answers to questions were different because I am not Korean, however the Koreans I did interview knew that I have a good understanding of Korean culture and parts of the discussions during the interviews took place around the fact that I am not Korean and so may not be able to fully understand the ideas being discussed – despite my knowledge of Korean.

Furthermore, six interviews also talked about the varying roles of foreign staff and Korean staff. To some extent this echoes the emotional aspects of the conversations in the sense that many people felt that others didn't understand or appreciate their own positions or roles within their organization. A common thread within this theme were comments such as: "this is part of their job" or "my role only extends to [a certain point]". As will be discussed below, this is connected to difficulties within multicultural organizations around job scopes and understandings around the fixed or fluid nature of roles within the organization. Additionally, there are strong cultural aspects that come into play around this area of the findings.

Change was a further topic of discussion that came up as a theme across half of the interviews. Korean staff in particular seemed to feel that expatriate staff didn't understand what had gone before and what would come afterwards, highlighted by one interviewee as "foreigners come and go and we are the ones left with the changes". There was a sense of disbelief at how often people come in, make changes and then leave without fully seeing them through. Change fatigue can result in employees tuning out to instructions because they have been through the process a number of times without seeing any benefit (Bernerth et al., 2011). Conversely, one expatriate expressed frustration at the lack of willingness to change from the Korean staff that he works alongside.

Finally, the theme of trust came up in half of the interviews. The word was used, from both perspectives, to express a lack of trust between expatriate and local staff. It was also used in relation to the overall organization, e.g. "Can we trust the school to take care of it?". The two areas may be linked, though they may also be separated into issues of trust at a personal level and those at an organizational level. Further discussion takes place below around trust issues within the multicultural environment.

Overall, the data findings highlight six areas for further discussion that link closely to the theoretical aspects of the power dynamics within multicultural organizations. Some are specifically linked to Korean culture whereas others can be considered more general in nature and may well apply to multicultural environments in other countries or contexts. Although educational organizations are the area of study for the project, it may be argued that none of the

issues that arose were specific to international schools and that similar issues can be found in a range of industries with aspects of intercultural interaction.

5. Discussion

In attempting to categorize the themes from the interview analysis, I sought to bring out the most common threads and weave them into findings that would offer scope for valid discussions around the issues that arose in the theoretical context of the study. The six most common areas discussed within the interviews may be condensed into the four main findings below:

Finding one: There exists significant areas of misunderstanding around Korean and Western cultural norms that cause frustration and unhappiness.

In some cases, the misunderstandings were directly expressed by the interviewees, for example, an expatriate said, “They [the Korean staff members] don’t do anything straight away; it is frustrating.” A Korean interviewee commented: “I don’t really understand what they [expatriate managers] mean much of the time; I often have to go and ask others to check if my understanding is correct but I am also aware that this slows down things and he [her manager] doesn’t like that.” These two comments are particularly telling as they are essentially two sides of the same coin, suggesting that there is common ground for problem solving available to both parties. Sometimes, although the comments were directly implied, it was necessary to infer meaning, for instance, one Korean employee talked about going home and being angry and upset because she felt that she wasn’t doing her job properly because she didn’t understand the “ways”

of the organization. She subsequently believed that her English was to blame - despite it being at a native speaker level, she believed that her knowledge of slang expressions and understanding were “not the same” as native speakers and therefore put her (and other Koreans) at a disadvantage. When pressed to elaborate, it came out that she had made a “mistake” a few months earlier in which she was asked to complete a series of tasks around some data for the school. Part of the task involved taking the initiative to source the data from different departments but the employee had not understood that this was expected. In Western culture, taking initiative and making independent decisions within certain parameters or contexts is encouraged, whereas Korean culture is based on a system of very direct instruction and any deviation from the instructions may be seen as problematic from the Korean employees’ point of view (De Mente, 2017).

From the interviews, it was found that Korean staff were essentially incapacitated. The organizational structure and daily practices bore little resemblance to their cultural background and belief structures and the Korean staff had essentially adopted a defence mechanism in order to survive on a day to day basis. This, in itself, was stressful for the Korean staff as there was little of the treasured harmony or long-term stability. The interviewees from overseas became frustrated with issues that they saw as straight-forward but which were alien to the cultural norms that Korean staff understood. One interviewee complained of being “unable to get straight answers” and another of “there is just a lack of initiative”. We can trace both of these complaints back to the philosophical groundings of both Korean and Western cultural norms. Whereas the individualistic West values initiative and go-getting as a positive trait, for Koreans this would be seen as rude and a potential upsetting of the harmony. Therefore, not getting a

straight answer can be seen as a Korean not wanting to give the wrong answer for fear of impacting on the *kibun* (harmony) of a leader and a lack of initiative is down to an acceptance on the part of the Korean staff as to the limits of their own role within the hierarchy.

The hierarchical nature of Korean thinking came up in all of the expat interviewees' interviews, mainly in a negative light. There was confusion around why they were not seen as part of the hierarchy even though they were leaders, e.g. a comment of "being ignored as I am not seen as within the hierarchy – even though I am a leader." This may be related to the dual streams of leadership that are often set up in international enterprises (Selmer, 2016). In this scenario, locals may lean towards the local leaders, knowing that they are culturally on the same page and that they will likely both be at the school for a longer time than the expatriates, so it makes sense from a harmony and relationship perspective to be loyal to that leader over one who is likely going to leave in a few years' time.

Interestingly, the points that the expatriates made did seem to be backed up by the data. Korean staff were focused more on their own ingroup than the overall hierarchy of the organization. There was a clear sense that their first loyalty was to their own group and the school itself over the expatriate leaders, which would seemingly go against the acknowledgement of the hierarchy. From this point of view, expatriates may be seen as bosses but not within the realm of the traditional Korean hierarchy. A Korean way of handling this would be to keep quiet and wait for instructions from the boss (Jouhki and Paso, 2011). This would match some comments from the expatriates who questioned the levels of initiative and get-up and go. It can be considered more

likely that the Koreans were awaiting clear and direct instructions rather than risking upsetting the balance of the hierarchical harmony.

Moreover, one interviewee complained that the “group mindset is frustrating” and that getting things done “feels like a political process or a chess game.” In fact, this would be a normal situation in Korean culture and the collectivist mindset relies on good relationships and group understandings in order for things to move forward. The frustrations or complexities come when there is a lack of harmony and the group mentality does not have a shared understanding. Thus, the comments from the expatriate interviewees highlight that there is disharmony within their respective organizations.

Finding two: The dichotomy of the roles within the organization for Korean and expatriate staff causes unhappiness and impacts on levels of trust within the organization.

One clear outcome from the interviews was the difference in perspective of the expatriate and Korean employees regarding their timeframe and commitment to the organization. It is common for expatriates to be posted to an organization for a time and then move on, whereas the local employee is more likely to be working there for a longer time. In international schools, teachers and leaders stay for varying lengths of time (Bunnell, 2016) but common time frames are between two and four years (Benson, 2011). In the case of the study, all of the Korean employees interviewed had worked at their organization for more than ten years.

Moreover, the organizations are led by expatriates in all the key positions with the exception of Korean members of staff who oversee the local employees. This places power in the realm of expert power (Singh, 2009) where an expatriate is seen as an expert who can guide and shape the organizational development. In reality, this brings its own issues and from a critical management perspective brings postcolonial or neocolonial actions into play. Moreover, the despotism of the expert who refuses to share his expertise (Huber, 1999) exhibits individualistic qualities that are the antithesis of the collectivism that Korean values seek to uphold. When distributed leadership was pursued it was amongst the expatriate staff only with little opportunities for local staff to move roles or positions. For instance, “You know, I have worked in the same job in the same room for eight years without any change. What makes them [the school leaders] think I will change?” In this response, we can see the angst of a Korean employee who has been unable to take part in decision-making and has been made to feel left out of the organizational dynamic. This was similar to other responses and, worryingly for the organization, this ingroup had formed a resistance to changes at the school. This highlights to us the relationship between the theoretical and the daily experience of employees should remain of the utmost priority in the minds of leaders. Maner and Mead’s (2010) proposal that experts may keep some knowledge to themselves because they wish to hold power from others and the organization for themselves is relevant but at international schools, the reasoning may be different. It would appear that the expatriate expert is simply not interested in distributing the leadership out to local staff preferring instead the educational expertise of the expatriate staff. It might be argued that this is devaluing to the staff who form the backbone of the schools.

Trust is an important factor in organizational health (Tzafrir, 2005). With much turnover, comes both a lack of trust in the organization and/or new colleagues, as it takes time to establish whether or not a new colleague or leader is trustworthy or not. This can take its toll on organizations in other ways. For instance, Ball (2012) identifies factions within organizations that can be more powerful than new leaders. The members of these factions often have worked together for a long time and have established greater trust with one another than they are able to with new colleagues or leaders. This may also mean that they are more likely to listen to one another or be interested in maintaining the status quo over undergoing any change initiatives that a new leader or staff member puts forward.

Furthermore, trust is a complicated element of Korean society. The Korean notion of an ingroup and an outgroup means that those inside the person's circle or ingroup will be immediately trusted (Kohls, 2001) whereas those outside will not. Indeed, Kim et al. (2012) found that loyalty to the ingroup was one of the key factors in Korean decision-making. It is also reasonably difficult to transfer from outside of the group to inside. At work, this means that often leaders' instructions are followed respectfully but without the emotional level of buy-in or trust that may be seen in Western organizations. The Korean notion of *chung*, or loyalty (De Mente, 2017) is also confused by the expatriate who enters the organization only to know that they will leave in a short amount of time. This creates confusion in the minds of Korean colleagues who are unsure what this means in terms of loyalty to the organization's cause or development. It may be that local employees don't consider it worthwhile to expand their loyalty or trust to the leader given the temporary nature of their stay but this does not mean they are not loyal to the organization. Indeed, Korean loyalty to the organization can be seen as important to the stability of the

international schools as it creates a consistency that would otherwise be missing as expatriate leaders and teachers move from school to school regularly. In some ways, this creates a power conflict. The overall health and wellbeing of the school is, arguably, on the mind of all employees but Korean staff may see their own situation as showing more *chung* as opposed to the foreigners who come and go and may only be using the school as a means to further their career, for example. From a Western perspective, employees may view their time at the school as a project over a limited amount of time focused on, for instance, improving the school's situation. Once this has been sorted out, it is time to move on to the next project. In a way, this represents a form of organizational devotion – a commitment to improving the organization - but from a different viewpoint it might be seen as treating the school for short term self-satisfaction rather than the deeper notion of loyalty that Koreans expect. For instance, one expatriate said, “it was a mess when I came in. There were no systems in place. Now, I’ve put those in place, it operates much more smoothly.” At the same organization, a Korean interview said, “the new leader has put a system in place but it is similar to one we had many years ago which didn’t really work and so many of us didn’t want to follow the new system.”

This finding is essentially the root of the issues around power found in the international organizations from which the interviews were drawn. As referenced within the body of the article above, international schools find themselves in a somewhat unique difficulty where the expert power of the expatriate is also an essential feature of the organizations themselves. However, this brings with it several negative consequences: a lack of trust, high turnover rates, high rates of change and a lack of empathy and understanding for local staff and culture. Moreover, it brings to the front the appraisals from a critical management perspective that the

postcolonial agenda is still alive and well in international schools as organizations. These notions link strongly to Ulus's (2015) notion of ambivalence and resistance. The Korean staff retreat back to a more comfortable group mentality and go through the motions of their tasks without trying to upset the status quo but without also being fully engaged in the dynamics of the organization. There was little evidence of the notion of the expatriate expert as a transformational leader (Zhou, 2017) from the interviews. Instead, the expatriates interviewed seemed somewhat resigned to having to deal with the frustration of working in the Korean environment for the time that they were to be in their roles. Indeed, one interviewee was quite angry when speaking about the Korean staff and commented that he felt that the lack of action on the part of Korean staff was simply "task avoidance masquerading as culture". When pressed as to how he might go about changing this, he shrugged his shoulders and replied that he had given up. Others were equally resigned but assigned not getting things done to "human nature" rather than pinpointing Koreans specifically. In order to deal with the organization had attempted "guidance but not rules" as the imposition of hard rules was felt to be "too harsh" an action.

Brewster et al. (2018) highlight the shift in modern human resources management to a more dynamic, fluid and flexible structure. We can immediately see how this may be problematic for Koreans who are used to a rigid hierarchy where everyone understands their role and its limitations and how this fits together. In a practical sense, this can come out within organizations, for example, one overseas interviewee referred to the "lack of flexibility" of Korean staff and another said the Korean staff often "don't seem to want to be involved". To some extent schools are unique in structure (Bates, 2011) and need all staff to contribute in multiple ways and roles; international schools are no different. This is not a compatible match for

Korean traditional thinking and has contributed to feelings of frustration within the South Korean international schools.

Finding three: The high rate of expatriate employee turnover in international organizations and consequent rates of change to organizational practice and norms is a factor.

From finding two, we can highlight a separate but related finding in that the large turnover which impacts on unhappiness and trust within the organization also creates a high rate of change. As new leaders come and go, they bring with them a plethora of changes – both minor and major – which rarely outlive them. This leaves those employees, often the locals, to deal with the impact of the constant changes which leave confusion in their midst. Moreover, having seen so many changes not followed through, the local employees suffer from change fatigue and are less likely to take seriously or commit energy to new initiatives as they have, in the words of one interviewee: “seen too many changes before”. Another interviewee spoke of a new principal or leader coming every few years and “trying to leave their mark before leaving” but complained of the succession of leaders “being unable to see the bigger picture” and how it was “doing damage to the school.”

One expatriate spoke in the interview of the number of places he had worked at, ostensibly to compare them to Korea but also highlighting that he had moved every three or four years to different cultures and countries. “Moving around so much, there is only a limited amount of time

to get things done so I want to make things happen more quickly than I might if I knew I was going to be here longer.”

International schools and similar organizations rely heavily on the local staff as the anchors to the constant ins and outs of the expatriate staff, however this is not without issues. In a discussion around leadership succession in school environments, Ball (2012) has defined the process as a very political one, where information might be held from incoming leaders in order to gain advantage within the microcosm of organizational politics. Two Korean interviewees alluded to the fact that they had continued their old practices even though the school had shifted its policy following the arrival of new leadership. For example, “To be honest, I just keep doing what I used to do, I’m not really sure of the new ideas and what they [the school leaders] want. I think my old way works so didn’t really change.”

Kohls (2001) advises expatriates in Korea to gain a trusted Korean informant as a means of bypassing the fact that he or she can never be included in the inner-circle, however, it might be argued, this opens up further the possibility of a leader being manipulated by those below. It is of note that Bal et al. (2008) highlight relationship power as a key to modern human resources in cross-cultural contexts. One issue with this advice in a South Korean context is the notion of the ingroup and the outgroup. The ingroup dynamic and harmony will always come above other relationships. Although overseas superiors are to be respected, attempts to try to form relationships that cause imbalance to the ingroup will be rebuffed, albeit in a polite, slow and possibly ambiguous manner. Kohls’ (2001) idea of an informant could be formalized into organizational structure by placing a well-respected, likely senior figure strategically into a

position that deals with staff on a regular basis, e.g. human resources. This would offer the advantage of being able to gauge Korean staff reaction to initiatives without breaking the cultural dynamic of the hierarchy. It would also be less frustrating to expatriates who can never truly belong to the hierarchical system. Moreover, it offers the double advantage of allowing a more inclusive atmosphere for the local staff and creating for a more sustainable evolutionary process. One danger is that this lynchpin could become too powerful themselves and begin to manipulate and control local staff, which would be something that the organization would need to take steps to guard against.

One result of multiple change initiatives and high turnover rates is resistance (Ball, 2012). Given that resistance is act of power, this correlates to Fleming and Spicer's (2007) argument that resistance as refusal will be a reaction to change. Refusal may not necessarily mean a refusal to do something outright or strike action as it could also be a refusal to follow new initiatives. Change fatigue has been associated with resistance (Fleming and Spicer, 2007) and Reeves (2009) has told us that schools are more prone to change fatigue, or what he terms initiative fatigue than other organizations. One reason for this is that schools are often political footballs in that they are forced to introduce new changes as governments come and go. Although international schools are often immune from immediate changes in the same way that public sector schools may not be, leaders and teachers moving from school to school and trying to leave their mark are often guilty of bringing ideas with them and dismissing existing school culture alongside it.

The importance placed on long-term thinking in the Korean mindset is also relevant when we consider the turbulent nature of international schools and similar organizations. As schools regularly turnover their staff and practices, this leaves the Korean staff in a state of flux which lacks both the harmony and the long-termism that are placed so highly in their minds. Employees that lack engagement in the organization can be detrimental to the organizations health (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

Finding four: International schools are in a paradoxical position

Moreover, from the interviewees it appears that there exists in international schools a departure from the expected outcome from the theoretical ideas and impacts of expert power. According to Singh (2009), organizations employing expert power and similar relationship-based and positive management styles should see increased motivation, communication and interaction, amongst other things. However, according to the interviews the expatriate expert model had done the opposite and had left people on both sides with feelings of unhappiness and frustration. For example, from one Korean employee when discussing a new change initiative: “I don’t take it very seriously. I am old. I am not interested in these things. I just come here and then go home.” An expatriate said: “I have tried to implement changes but there is some resistance; I find it hard work. I won’t be around much longer anyway.”

It may be possible, therefore, to put forward that international schools in Korea and similar organizations have incorrectly used the idea of expert power and have created a despotic or autocratic version of an expert leader. This expert leader and associated staff members are likely

to implement changes with little regard for local staff or previous changes and developments that predecessors have put into place. They will stay in their position for several years before leaving and moving on to another position. These expert leaders have little knowledge or regard for the local culture, customs or language and prefer to impose a Western style model within 'sovereign states'.

However, it has to be made clear that the fault is not entirely within the hands of individuals. International schools existed originally to serve expatriate communities and although that market has changed and now includes a broader customer base (Hayden, 2006) including local community members, the initial ideas and organizational structures behind the international schools have undergone few changes. This is in part because there is a market demand for the expat educational leaders and teachers at the schools (Holmes, 2014). Schools with high quality expatriate teachers and leaders are likely to attract more students. Yet, this model is in direct contrast to the needs and requirements of local staff who are often the longest serving members of the schools in which they work but whose opinions and institutional knowledge are not sought out by expatriate experts. This in turn has led to acts of resistance and feelings of unhappiness and frustration. Moving forward, international schools need to adapt more distributive leadership approaches which include and value local staff and their knowledge.

6. Recommendations

Over the course of the study, recurring themes have appeared. There is a huge importance placed by Koreans on the Confucian values of loyalty, harmony, hierarchy and the collective mindset. These ideals are essentially at odds with the idea of the expatriate with expert power that is used in international school environments. This model of organizational structure, coupled with the high turnover of expatriate staff that is usual for the international school sector, has brought frustration, unhappiness and a lack of trust into the workplace. It has also led to resistance from Korean staff members which have caused further frustrations and have impacted on organizational health.

Of note is that cross-cultural organizations in other sectors are making use of strategies that could be of benefit to the international schools in South Korea. There is significant correlation between some cross-cultural practices and the issues that arose in the interviews.

The three main findings of the study show that a lack of trust, unhappiness and change fatigue have been the main sentiments expressed by employees in the interviews. Therefore, it is recommended that these issues are addressed in the following ways:

Recommendation One: There is a need for culturally-intelligent leadership.

Whether or not the expatriate as expert model can be changed, there is scope for developing more culturally-intelligent leadership. As Moua (2016) reminds us: “Culturally intelligent

leaders need be strategic in aligning the culture of their organizations with the people who work in them.” Modern international human resources management practice shows us that there is more emphasis on social and emotional intelligence from leaders and the old model of efficiency and getting things done has been left behind. International school leaders in Korea are still displaying too much of this old style thinking. Leaders will need to receive training in Korean culture and thinking in order to keep these important factors in mind when leading the organizations. The current model where expatriates come and go as experts exercising power with little regard for what is currently in place or has gone before is no longer sustainable and has resulted in stress and disharmony within the schools in Korea. Moreover, we have learned that a dual leadership model that makes use of a local and expatriate leader can cause internal power issues. It is suggested that a more pragmatic solution may be to have local leaders with good international experience in key areas for employees, such as human resources, but maintain an overall organizational leader who is capable of culturally intelligent leadership.

Recommendation Two: Build for sustainable change

Paton and McCalman (2008) highlight that the organization’s people are the keys to making change sustainable. This has been neglected by international schools in Korea who have followed a boom and bust model of growth relying on a supply of expert expatriate leaders bringing in a succession of initiatives before moving on and leaving little in the way of legacy. Instead school leaders and local staff members need to be brought together in a more long-term and sustainable vision for the schools. This might be a board level action. For example, the board is able to control the parameters in which school leaders operate and by limiting their changes

and initiatives to within tighter longer-term framework, they can go some way to building stability for local and longer-term staff without losing the dynamism and cutting-edge ideas and practices that expert leaders can bring. This would also help to curb any power struggles that take place at the micro-level as all school employees should be seeking to serve the long-term vision.

Recommendation Three: Build capacity for local staff members

As recommendation two showed, people are key figures in sustainable change. For international schools, this means local staff members who are the ones that stay for the longer term. However, these same staff members have developed practices of resistance to combat change fatigue as a succession of leaders and initiatives have come and gone. Instead, international schools are advised to build capacity in local staff to act as agents of sustainability. The old model of one powerful leader for all local staff has morphed into a more distributed model across various departments (Drori et al., 2006), which has allowed for growth. Even if international schools are tied to maintaining the expatriate expert as leader and teachers, there is no conflict in building capacity in other positions for local staff as international schools seek to build on local knowledge and expertise, cultural awareness and the pursuit of a more stable and sustainable growth model. Employees that are not engaged are at best disenchanted and at worst resistant to changes and initiatives that may further the organization. Therefore, there is a need for culturally sensitive moves that raise employee engagement for the local staff.

7. Conclusion

International schools are set-up along lines that are destined to cause clashes and disharmony in the Korean mindset. As a result, Korean staff behave in a way that might be considered to be a form of resistance in order to gain some level of security or control in ever-changing organizations which lack the key Korean values of harmony, trust and long-term stability. As expatriate staff come and go they inflict their own ideas and concepts on to other recent additions from predecessors in a display of expert power. There needs to be greater emphasis placed on sustainable change and cross-cultural harmony within international schools in South Korea if an improvement in staff morale and a solution to the internal power struggles is to be seen.

Critical management scholars have indicated that organizations such as international schools are set-up along postcolonial lines and maintain the injustices associated with colonial attitudes and practices. This was found to be somewhat true from the data gathered but there are mitigating factors involved in the case of international schools who rely on the idea of expatriate experts as a form of capital. However, this should not preclude the organizations from further developing opportunities for local staff and attempting to create more harmonious circumstances for the organization and employees overall by following the recommendations made by this study.

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