

Chapter 6

The Ethnic Gap in Teacher Salaries in International Schools: A Question of Justice

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to outline the phenomenon known as split salaries in international schools. This qualitative phenomenological study explores the research question, What are the lived work experiences and perceptions of host country national (HCN) teachers employed in international schools utilizing a split-salary scale? Rawls' theory of justice as fairness served as the theoretical framework to answer the research question. Ten HCN teachers took part in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Three key themes emerged—power, othering, and the cost of compromise—as national teachers struggle to reconcile working in an environment that implicitly suggests they will never be good enough. This research can inform administrators and school owners that international schools should no longer be bastions of privilege and that using a purely business approach to staffing does not align with international school missions.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to explore the phenomenon of split salaries in international schools from the lived experiences and perspectives of Host Country National (HCN) teachers better to to better understand the effect on their experiences in those schools. The design was influenced by the recommendations of Tyvand (2017) and Bunnell and Atkinson (2020) for more qualitative studies better to to better comprehend the practice of split salaries in international schools. Due to the paucity of research in this area, the

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purpose of this study was to bring to life and shed light on the experiences of HCN teachers working in a split-salary environment.

The objectives of this chapter are to raise awareness and assist others in comprehending what it is like to work within a split salary structure in international schools as a host country national teacher. The author aims to amplify the conversation about salary practices in international schools. The results of this study could enable international school directors and administrators to consider how to address this disparity and ensure that their schools align their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) statements.

BACKGROUND

The international school market is growing exponentially (Bunnell, 2021), with over 13,000 such institutions worldwide (International Schools Consultancy [ISC] Research, 2023). Additionally, as global economies improve and incomes rise, more families aspire to better educational standards for their children than local state education systems provide, further amplifying the schools' growth (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). This growth in international schools has given rise to an international school industry (Macdonald, 2006), leading to increased competitiveness and globalisation (Hughes, 2020). As the number of international schools increases globally, so does the demand for international schoolteachers, school teachers particularly those from the United States or the United Kingdom (COBIS, 2020). Equally, as the number of international schools increases, there is a proportional need for qualified host-country nationals (HCNs) and expatriate staff (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). The growing competition among international schools has commodified international schoolteachers school teachers (Khalil, 2019).

International schools traditionally have a teaching staff that falls into three distinct categories: (a) HCNs, (b) "local hire" expatriates, and (c) "overseas hire" expatriates (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Bunnell (2006) identified international schools' organisational structure as comprising "an administrative leadership core, a fringe of relatively highly paid professional expatriates on short-term contracts, and a large pool of lower-paid, locally hired staff" (p. 168).

Many international schools have disproportionately more U.S. and U.K. expatriate teachers than other nationalities and do not align well with their student demographics (Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020). The imbalance of nationalities shows international schools' recruitment bias for U.S. and U.K. teachers (Bunnell, 2020) at the expense of other expatriates or local staff opportunities. However, the problem is that in many international schools, expatriate teachers earn substantially higher salaries than HCNs, even for the same job (Canterford, 2003; Khalil, 2019; Tyvand, 2017). The remuneration difference stems from the supply and demand business principle, with salaries two to five times higher for expatriate teachers (Chen et al., 2002). The pay differential is particularly apparent in countries from the Global South, which broadly refers to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania and replaces the politically laden terms of Third World or developing world countries (Dados & Connell, 2012).

SPLIT SALARIES IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Edna Bonacich (1972) introduced the term "split labor market" to describe how some workers receive different pay than others based on nationality or ethnicity. However in the past 50 years, few studies have

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