Integrating realistic job previews and realistic living conditions previews

Realistic recruitment for internationally mobile knowledge workers

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the use of realistic job previews (RJPs) and realistic living conditions previews (RLCPs) during the recruitment of a group of internationally mobile knowledge workers who elect to go overseas independently rather than as part of an overseas assignment. It also aims to explore individual perceptions of the value of RJPs and RLCPs in contributing to work and general living adjustment.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper draws on a qualitative study of international faculty in six Canadian universities using in-depth interviews to examine their experiences of recruitment and focusing specifically on the extent to which RJPs and RLCP were provided.

Findings – The findings reflect the need for realistic recruitment that includes information about position specifications and responsibilities as well as non-organizational factors such as opportunities for spousal employment. Thus, respondents did not conceptualize the recruitment process in terms of two separate components of "job" (RJP) and "living conditions" (RLCP). Instead realistic recruitment emerged as a holistic process, with each individual having his/her own differential weighting of the relative importance of different factors.

Research limitations/implications – The sample comprises mostly white-western faculty, thus ethnic minority faculty are underrepresented. Further research might also explore the perceptions and experiences of international recruiters.

Originality/value – The paper extends the current literature on RJPs and RLCPs to consider internationally mobile knowledge workers who elect to go overseas independently. Located within an interpretive perspective it also enhances our understanding of individual experiences and the need for a more holistic approach to international recruitment.

Keywords International organizations, Recruitment, Job previews, Standard of living, Universities, Canada

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The academic marketplace is increasingly global, where international mobility is a common feature of many academic careers (Baruch and Hall, 2004; Kaulisch and Enders, 2005). Although there has been widespread interest in the recruitment of managers and corporate executives for international assignments (e.g. Andreason, 2003; Brewster and Suutari, 2005; Fish, 2005; Fisher and Hartel, 2003; Glanz, 2004; Stroh *et al.*, 2005), we know very little about the recruitment of faculty and other internationally mobile professionals. Drawing on a study of 44 international academics in six Canadian universities, this paper addresses that gap by exploring their

experiences of the recruitment process. The empirical evidence presented in the paper suggests the need for a more holistic approach to ensure realistic recruitment of international faculty instead of separate consideration of realistic job previews (RJPs) (Wanous, 1992) and realistic living conditions previews (RLCPs) (Templer *et al.*, 2006). The potential implications of not doing so for faculty well-being, productivity and turnover rates are profound and will also be discussed.

While international faculty have their own specific characteristics, they share some similarities with other groups of internationally mobile professionals, particularly those who elect to take an overseas position independently rather than being sent as part of an expatriate assignment. They are leaving behind friends, family and familiar communities and are required to learn and adjust to a new professional environment which may have different expectations for promotion and job security. International faculty are also exemplars of internationally mobile knowledge workers (Jones, 2000; Williamson and Cable, 2003). As knowledge workers they reflect the first of Reed's (as cited in Legge, 2002, p.75) three categories of knowledge workers – traditional professionals, whose knowledge is codified and rational. Their knowledge is their chief selling point in the job marketplace. Indeed, in electing to take a position in a foreign university, international faculty are demonstrating significant confidence in the portability and transferability of their knowledge and experience and of themselves as mobile knowledge workers. In a context where knowledge workers play an increasingly important role in the "information-based economy" (Donnelly, 2006) it is appropriate that we move towards a better understanding of the most effective human resource management (HRM) practices to recruit and retain such workers. This seems especially important given the putative freedom of mobility, need for self-development and self-management that characterizes knowledge workers such as academics (Baruch and Hall, 2004).

Despite the widespread rhetoric about the existence of a global academic community, there are significant professional challenges in accepting a faculty position in an overseas university, e.g. establishing working relationships with new colleagues, managing one's professional development and leaving behind extended family members and familiar social contexts (Richardson and Mallon, 2005; Richardson and McKenna, 2003). Yet, as universities compete for faculty in a highly competitive international academic marketplace, they may be tempted to "oversell" the positions they are seeking to fill and exaggerate the desirability of their respective social contexts. Drawing on interviews with international faculty, our findings corroborate other research investigations that have indicated that high quality employees are not necessarily deterred from applying to organizations utilizing realistic recruitment (e.g. Saks and Cronshaw, 1990). In fact, recruits often look more favorably on their host institution for providing more realistic information. By comparison, recruiting previews that "sell the job" may have a detrimental effect on subsequent individual performance, relationships with colleagues and, in some cases, intention to remain with the host institution (Phillips, 1998). Our paper will also suggest specific practical solutions for developing effective realistic recruiting processes for international faculty.

We begin by exploring current themes in the literature on RJPs and RLCPs, noting how they are traditionally treated as distinct dimensions of the recruitment process.

The increasing international mobility of academics will then be discussed with a particular focus on academia as a "global enterprise" and the concomitant implications for HR practices, in this case recruitment. After presenting the methodological design of the study, our findings will be presented and discussed, with specific consideration of the implications for recruitment of international knowledge workers such as faculty, and suggestions to develop more effective realistic recruitment processes.

RJPs and RLCPs

There has been widespread academic and practitioner interest in the concept of the RJP, particularly with respect to "unmet expectations", usually understood as "the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he expected to encounter" (Porter and Steers, 1973, p. 152). An RJP is, therefore, a means of avoiding unmet expectations by providing "accurate, favourable, and unfavourable job-related information to job candidates" (Templer *et al.*, 2006, p.158). An RJP facilitates met expectations by helping to ensure congruence between new recruits' expectations and their subsequent work experience. It can also operate as an organizational mechanism for guiding individual career development (Baruch, 2003). This is particularly useful in the context of employees recruited from outside the organization, i.e. "external recruits" such as international faculty, whose knowledge of their new employer and indeed their host country may be restricted to what they have been told during the interview and/or what they have been able to find out for themselves from external sources. According to Wanous *et al.* (1992, p. 288) the specific value of ensuring expectations are met is reflected in stage models of organizational socialization where "all of these models assume that unmet expectations cause a variety of post-entry adjustment problems, for example, low job satisfaction and early turnover". Yet, some employers may be reluctant to disclose "negative" information about the nature of the job and/or their organization for fear of reducing the number of applicants and/or dissuading potential recruits from accepting positions offered (Thorsteinson *et al.*, 2004). Such fears may be particularly acute in a tight job market. Given the worldwide shortage of faculty (Doucet, 2005; Holloway, 2004; Ward, 2004) and the concomitant concerns about faculty recruitment and retention (Ambrose *et al.*, 2005), universities may be especially tempted to present vacancies in an overly positive light.

Bearing in mind the logistical, personal and professional implications of making an overseas move, an RJP may be particularly important for individuals who are relocating to another country (Wanous, 1992). According to Fish (2005, p. 225):

> ... false and misleading information and perceptions surrounding a new role and its particular circumstances can, and indeed does, contribute to problematic adjustment.

Adding to the literature on RJPs, Templer *et al.* (2006, p. 159) have introduced the separate concept of an RLCP, defined as the provision of "accurate favourable and unfavourable information on the general living environment in the host country". Drawing on a survey-based study of 179 "global business professionals" on expatriate assignments in Singapore, they suggest that an RJP and an RLCP are useful mechanisms for managing individual expectations and enhancing overseas adjustment. More specifically, they suggest that RJPs will "ease work adjustment"

(Templer *et al.*, 2006, p. 168) and that RLCPs "may facilitate adjustment to the day to day routines in the foreign assignment" (Templer *et al.*, 2006, p. 168).

Although the arguments for an RJP and an RLCP are intuitively appealing, what constitutes "realistic" is invariably dynamic and permeated by subjectivity, as will be demonstrated with our research findings. It may be, for example, that different kinds of information may be deemed more important than others depending on the specific characteristics and circumstances of each new recruit. Rynes (1991), for example, suggests that communicating negative information about a position is more likely to have an adverse effect on highly qualified applicants. However, Bretz and Judge (1998) found that negative information about time pressures and problematic relationships with co-workers did not detract from organizational attraction. In a study of faculty in the USA (Ambrose *et al.*, 2005) levels of satisfaction were connected to several key themes: salary, collegiality, mentoring, tenure and promotion and the management style of the departmental head. Of these themes collegiality and tenure and promotion processes were noted as being particularly important. Thus, one faculty member complained that the tenure and promotion process in his previous institution was "completely opaque". Others complained that standards for promotion and tenure were inconsistently applied to candidates. It may be, therefore, that in the context of international faculty recruitment these same themes would be important elements of realistic recruitment.

International mobility and academic careers

Academia, scholarly teaching and research are increasingly internationally-connected activities where faculty regularly engage in global travel (Baruch and Hall, 2004). Moreover, with the putative shortage of faculty in some industrialized countries such as Canada (Foot, 2006), the academic job marketplace is increasingly international. Indeed, 38 percent of all faculty teaching in Canadian universities in 2001 were born outside of Canada (CAUT, 2007).

Kaulisch and Enders (2005) suggest that academic careers operate in several social contexts: the science context, the national context and the institutional context. The science context is the context of academia, which is characterized by disciplinary divisions, rules for conducting research and the production of knowledge. Although we might assume disciplinary synergy across national boundaries, the individual faculty member must also operate within given national and institutional contexts, each with its own set of rules and expectations. Thus, given the reported impact of social community and institutional differences on faculty experiences (Ambrose *et al.*, 2005; Bensimon *et al.*, 2004; Johnsrud and Rosser, 2003) RJPs and RLCPs may be essential for successful international relocation. Indeed, we would suggest that they might also be necessary for national relocation, as there are frequently considerable regional, cultural and urban/rural variations within countries that are over and above differences among different academic institutions.

Methodology
Data collection
The larger study from which this paper draws its data was located within an interpretive framework which assumes a close connection between individual

experience, meaning and behavioural outcomes (Denzin, 1989). Its main objective was to provide an "emic" or individualized understanding of the experiences of international faculty. In order to facilitate this objective and ensure theoretical consistency, a qualitative methodology was adopted. This approach also enabled exploration of the potential connectivity between experiences, meaning and behavioral outcomes as reported by respondents in their own terms. Adopting a qualitative approach also contributes another important dimension to the existent literature on realistic recruitment given that Templer *et al.*'s (2006) study, introduced above, used a survey-based quantitative approach.

The specific qualitative method used in this study was in-depth face-to-face interviews. Each interview lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours. All interviews except one were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the instance where the faculty member asked not to be recorded, detailed notes were taken during the interview and included in data analysis. The interviews explored three main recruitment themes: individual background and the decision to come to Canada; the experience of being in Canada; and retrospective evaluations of that experience. Although an agenda of themes identified a priori ensured consistency between interviews, participants could and did introduce further themes that were pertinent to their own experiences (see Figure 1). This approach reflects other studies of faculty where participants were encouraged to tell their own "stories" in their own words (e.g. Ambrose *et al.*, 2005).

Turning to the objectives of this particular paper, a key concern was to examine individual faculty experiences of how they were recruited and particularly the extent to which they were provided with RJPs and RLCPs. Each interview began with an open-ended question asking "How would you describe your experiences of the recruitment process?" Although a specific question "To what extent do you think you had a realistic preview of what it would be like to live in (name of city where university was located)" was also included in the interview agenda it was rarely necessary to ask because participants invariably included this theme in their response to the initial question about the recruitment process. That participants blended the information they received on their position and the respective living conditions is significant because it suggests a more holistic experience of international recruitment.

Sampling

For the purposes of this study, international faculty are defined as "teachers, researchers and senior academic staff" (Mwenifumbo and Renner, 1998) not originating from Canada who are currently employed in a Canadian university. Faculty who were on sabbatical were excluded from the sample. All participants had held a university position outside of Canada prior to taking their current position. Previous positions ranged from post-doctoral appointments to full professorships. These criteria supported exploration of the perceived differences between professional experience in Canada and other countries.

Invitations to participate in the study were sent to faculty in each of the six host institutions. Thus all faculty taking part in the study were self-selected. The six universities were chosen because they represented different geographical areas of Canada, different sizes of institution, and different balances of teaching and/or research
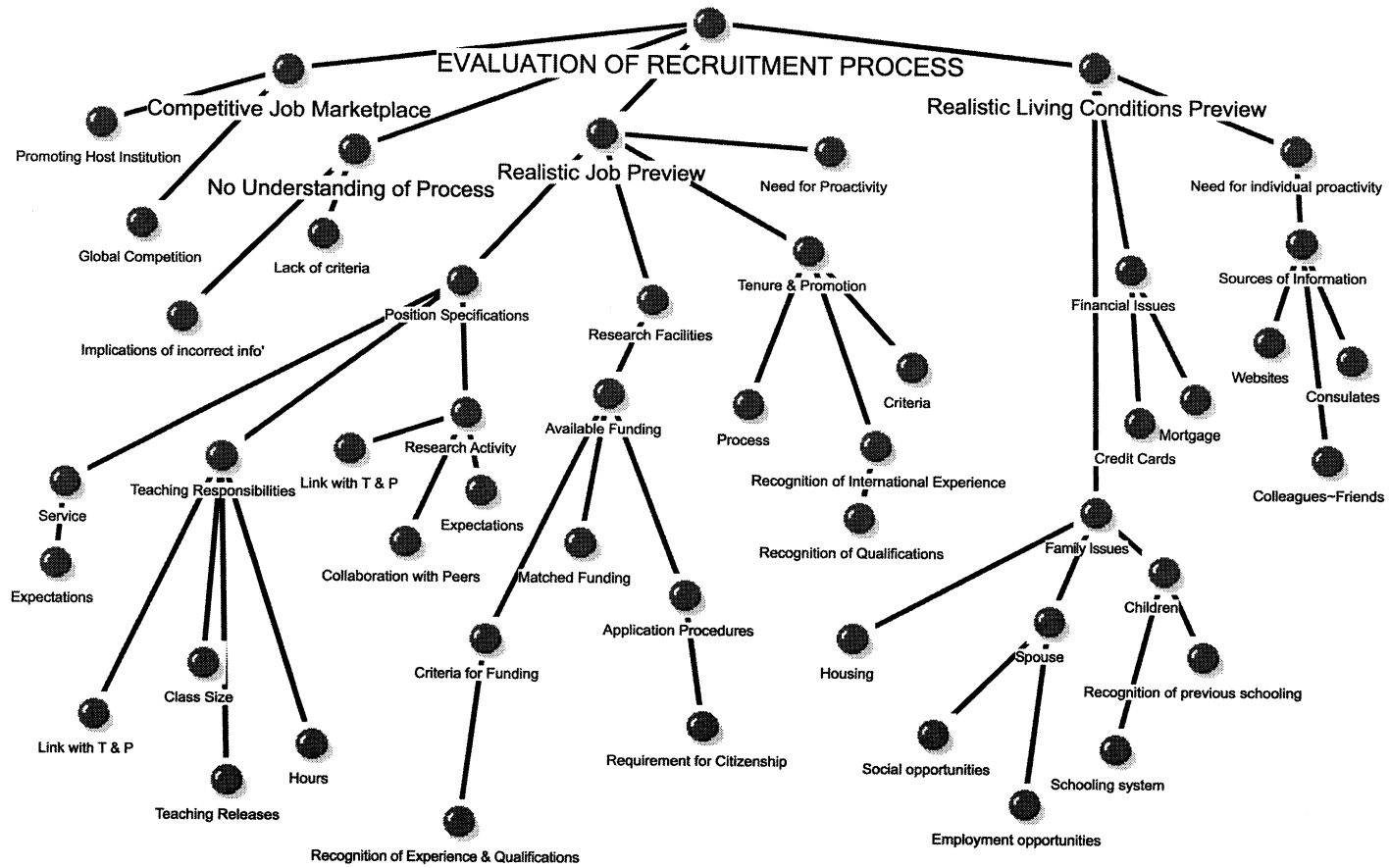
EVALUATION OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Competitive Job Marketplace

Promoting Host Institution

No Understanding of Process

Realistic Job Preview

Need for Proactivity

Realistic Living Conditions Preview

Need for individual proactivity

Global Competition

Lack of criteria

Implications of incorrect info'

Position Specifications

Research Facilities

Tenure & Promotion

Sources of Information

Financial Issues

Research Activity

Available Funding

Criteria

Websites

Consulates

Link with T & P

Process

Recognition of International Experience

Recognition of Qualifications

Mortgage

Credit Cards

Colleagues~Friends

Teaching Responsibilities

Expectations

Service

Collaboration with Peers

Matched Funding

Family Issues

Children

Expectations

Criteria for Funding

Application Procedures

Housing

Spouse

Recognition of previous schooling

Link with T & P

Class Size

Requirement for Citizenship

Social opportunities

Schooling system

Teaching Releases

Hours

Recognition of Experience & Qualifications

Employment opportunities

intensity. Two, for example, are located in smaller communities, whereas the remainder are in or adjacent to large cities. These selection criteria were designed in order to compare the findings with other studies suggesting that differences in geographical location, institutional size, structure, funding sources and student bodies impact on faculty experiences (e.g. Ambrose *et al.*, 2005; Johnsrud and Rosser, 2003; Wolf-Wendel *et al.*, 2003). While there were no regional differences between faculty experiences of recruitment, there were some differences with regard to social adjustment and opportunities for spouses to find suitable employment. Those regional differences have been reported elsewhere (Richardson *et al.*, 2006).

All faculty who volunteered to participate, and who met the criteria set out above, were personally contacted by the researchers in order to schedule an interview. Of the 52 volunteers, 44 were subsequently interviewed, with the remaining eight not being interviewed due to scheduling conflicts. The majority of the sample was male (70 percent) and 88 percent were European/Caucasian. These figures are generally congruent with the faculty demographics in Canadian universities as reported by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT, 2007 (using 2002/03 Statistics Canada data)). Although the sample reflects different academic disciplines, over half were from the natural/medical/health sciences. In order to address these sampling limitations, the researchers are currently extending the study to include more visible minorities, and more disciplinary breadth. The sample is also limited with respect to the relative representation of different academic ranks. Thus, it comprised of 34 percent assistant professors, 23 percent associate professors and 43 percent full professors (of which 4 percent were deans). This differs somewhat from the distribution of ranks in all Canadian universities of 23 percent, 32 percent, 38 percent, for the three rank categories, respectively (Sussman and Yssaad, 2005). Yet, 66 percent of the sample were tenured, which is close to the proportion of tenured faculty in Canadian universities (70 percent) (Sussman and Yssaad, 2005).

Data analysis
Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed using the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo. Template analysis (King, 1998) allowed themes to be identified, coded and connected, where appropriate. An initial set of themes, informed by an earlier study of international faculty (Richardson and Mallon, 2005) provided a loose coding framework. Subsequently, however, the framework was amended to incorporate new themes introduced by faculty in this particular study. The addition of new codes and removal of others was useful in three ways. First, it reflected different experiences between faculty in the two studies, e.g. in the earlier study there were no faculty for whom English was a second language. Second, it suggested that some of the new themes might be unique to Canada. Third, it ensured that the final findings were wholly informed by the respondents of this particular study.

The methodological limitations of any approach to data collection and analysis must be acknowledged. Clearly, as with much empirical research, the findings presented here are only a portion of what might be discovered. Moreover, the issue of individual subjectivity looms large. Yet, what is important here is not the extent to which participants' interpretations are factually "correct" but that the findings reflect participants' own interpretations of the recruitment process (Denzin, 1989). Thus the

emphasis here is on finding out about participants' experiences of recruitment and how those experiences have influenced their subsequent behavior.

Results

Faculty experiences and interpretations of recruitment are presented below according to the main and subsidiary themes that emerged. In order to retain the anonymity of those who took part in the study all names have been changed and specific institutions are not identified. Although the themes relating to RJPs and RLCPs are presented separately, it is critical to note that respondents did not perceive the two dimensions as separate. Rather, their accounts suggested that the boundaries between the two are blurred. We contend, therefore, that employers might be well-advised to consider a more holistic approach in the recruitment of internationally mobile knowledge workers, particularly those who are going overseas independently rather than as part of an expatriate assignment as is the case for the academics in this study.

To begin, it is worth noting that when asked to evaluate how they were recruited, the majority of faculty focused on the extent to which they had been provided with realistic information more generally. They did not distinguish between organizational and non-organizational information. Levels of satisfaction with the recruitment process were mixed. Just under 40 percent indicated some level of dissatisfaction. The implications of this finding are important given that applicants' evaluations are likely to impact on their image of the organization as a potential employer (Lievens *et al.*, 2002). It also suggests that being offered a job does not automatically lead to satisfaction with the recruitment process. Yet, some accounts were very positive describing how recruiters had provided realistic and useful information about a variety of organizational and non-organizational factors. Both the positive and negative themes that emerged will be reported here in order to provide an accurate understanding of the findings.

Before exploring the specific issues of realistic recruitment, it is worthwhile reporting some of the general thoughts about faculty recruitment processes. These thoughts reflected participants' involvement in recruitment as potential recruits and recruiters. It is notable that two of the participants in this study were deans with extensive experience of recruitment. Moreover, virtually all the tenured faculty had some experience serving on faculty recruitment panels. The accounts reflected widespread awareness of an increasingly competitive academic marketplace, which was understood to be especially intense in Canada given the shortage of "home-grown" faculty (Foot, 2006). Several faculty expressed concern that this puts Canadian universities under considerable pressure to present a positive image to potential recruits, even to the point of exaggeration:

> I think they were pretty much trying hard to put on a good impression and let me know that this was a good place to come as you would do with any job candidate and it didn't hurt that they showed me what was probably the biggest office in the department (Tony).

> They may feel the need to dangle nice things in front of you ... and then when you get in it's always a little different than what they said (Oisin).

> They kept saying it was usually very sunny at this time of the year but actually it was just cold and very wet. I think they were worried that I would think that the weather was terrible.... (Polina).

Both tenured and untenured faculty expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the design of the recruitment process. Thus, one participant reported a lack of information about how it would evolve and who would be the main decision makers:

> It was not clear to me who was on the hiring committee. I came into town, did a seminar, was handed off to people throughout the day ... met with a graduate student or whatever graduate students would meet with me, met with the Dean, met with various people from various places all across the campus and then dinner and lunch and all of that (Polina).

The desire for clarity among untenured faculty is understandable given their limited experience of recruitment and the university system more generally. Indeed, three untenured faculty specifically identified their lack of experience as a reason for needing more clarity. Several tenured faculty also said that they would have liked some guidance as to how the recruitment process in Canada operates given that it was very different to their experience of faculty recruitment in their home countries. Thus, Nick who was appointed with tenure, and later became a full professor, was surprised when he had to spend the whole day with the recruitment panel, including having an evening meal, and then meet other members of faculty and administrators.

Provision of an RJP – realistic job information
The extent to which faculty members were provided with realistic information about their job was a key theme in their evaluation of the recruitment process. This information was associated with a further three "sub-themes": position specifications and responsibilities, tenure and promotion criteria and information about research facilities and funding.

Position specifications and responsibilities. Complaints about the lack of detailed information about position specifications reflect Kaulisch and Enders' (2005) notion of differences between the various contexts of academia. Thus, although there may be an international academic community, national, institutional and regional differences mean that the specific dimensions of a faculty position may vary. The excerpt below from a faculty member who came to Canada from Russia captures the flavor of this finding:

> Things work entirely differently in Russian academia ... it's very hierarchical and you have to be teamed-up with a senior member to achieve anything. It's not like that here (Felix).

Another faculty member, Ray, elaborated on the differences between the requirements of doctoral programs in India compared to Canada and the USA. He described how in India (as in Europe, Australia and New Zealand) doctoral programs might involve a good deal of independent study, rather than or in addition to course work and comprehensive examinations. Yet, the interview panel's questions were predicated on an assumption that he had followed the North American model. He also described floundering during the first few months of being in Canada due to the high levels of autonomy in his current position compared to what he had experienced in India. Whereas untenured faculty with limited experience might be expected to require more information about their job specifications and responsibilities it is notable that tenured faculty who had arrived in Canada with previous experience also emphasized the importance of accurate job descriptions. Their major concern was that the roles and responsibilities they had in their previous appointment were often quite dissimilar to

what they later experienced in Canada. Thus, for example, several participants from Britain described having to adjust to the tenure and promotion system as an entrenched part of academia in Canada. This was complicated further by lack of clarity in the information provided about "T & P" during the interview, where some participants reported problems with fulfilling or balancing teaching, research and service responsibilities:

> I learned by word of mouth, and I survived that way ... [but] I think they do have it now, a more structured introduction to university life, university expectations, the bureaucracy of the university which is the most dreaded thing, even now (Martha).

> I don't think it was very clear at all because I was the first professor in this area hired by them. It was very clear (that one part of) my job was to raise money to expand the program ... and I did that but otherwise it wasn't very clear (Luigi).

It is important to note that the participants who reported receiving appropriate information about the nature of their position also said that they had been proactive obtaining information for themselves. Moreover, these participants tended to have more experience of international and national mobility. Self-initiated or otherwise, however, a key finding here is that faculty like Zach, below, who received clear information about their roles and responsibilities also reported being productive within a relatively short period after their arrival:

> What the job entailed was reasonably well laid-out, although you never really have a clear understanding of what the work day is like until you get here. All in all, I felt pretty comfortable with what I was getting into. The salary was pretty clear and then when I got here there was quite a bit of orientation. So I moved on pretty quickly (Zach).

Tenure and promotion criteria. Given the impact of tenure and promotion decisions on an academic career (Gist, 1996), it is not surprising that "T & P" was a dominant theme in the accounts of most untenured faculty. Faculty who had been granted tenure while they had been at current institution also raised this theme although they seemed to be less troubled by it. By comparison, those who had been appointed with tenure or promoted to full professor on appointment did not refer to it at all. It is understandable that faculty who are currently untenured expressed most concern. Indeed, they have most to lose from not understanding the respective policies. Thus Rudi, Vita and Kerry who were all untenured, were especially troubled by their recruitment panel's failure to provide clear information about departmental tenure and promotion policies:

> It's that public service that I'm not clear on. What precisely qualifies as public service, and is it really as they're suggesting, one third of each? I fail to see how I'm going to fulfil one third of my time in public service (Rudi).

> What I don't know is what I really need for promotion and tenure like how many articles a year do I need to publish? How many committees I need to be on? (Vita).

> I mean when you're being told by Deans that there's not a problem to get tenure here, ... but then you come and you see it's all a lie. It is important that at my age I have moved around so much in the last eight or ten years or so, for me it was important that I had the paper that showed that I can stay here (Kerry).

In this context, the importance of realistic recruitment appears particularly significant. While the faculty member also bears some responsibility for establishing the criteria against which they will be evaluated, two participants in this study reported that they had been given incorrect information. It seems unlikely that the respective recruiters deliberately provided false information. Yet, this finding raises an important issue about the responsibility of the recruitment committee to ensure that any information provided is factually correct. This responsibility may be especially important in contexts where departmental criteria are unclear as suggested by Vita, below:

> There is documentation, but it's not 100 percent clear, and it's for another department, not for this department so there are some differences between departments.

Research facilities and funding. Given the close connectivity between research activity, professional advancement and learning, it is not surprising that many participants (both tenured and untenured) emphasized the need for accurate information about access to research facilities and funding. The connectivity is especially important bearing in mind that professional development and learning is a key feature of what it means to be a knowledge worker and an academic (Scott, 2005). Canadian universities face particular challenges in this respect amid perceptions of lucrative research funding available in the USA. Several participants, like Rudi below, complained about receiving only vague information about research support and funding:

> I was told that I would get a certain amount of money for start up and that I would be eligible for CFI money, … I was not told how much money that would be but I was under the impression that it could be several hundred thousands of dollars … the other surprise was that my start-up money would have to be used as matching money for that sum. So I couldn't tap into that start-up money as freely as I thought. It had to be saved to be used as matching money and so it was locked in.

A key concern here is that having only limited access to funding would have a detrimental impact on Rudi's ability to develop his disciplinary expertise. This limitation could be especially important given that fulfilling the need for continuous learning is a key dimension of what it means to be an academic. Inability to access funding and limitations in funding opportunities were important for junior faculty who were concerned about the implications for tenure and promotion. However, tenured faculty were also concerned because they felt that lack of access to funding would limit their professional development. As a further point, where international faculty are concerned it is important to distinguish between "potential" funding opportunities and access to funding, because although some participants had accurate information about opportunities for funding, specific criteria for awards meant that they were ineligible to apply. Thus, awards from government institutions gave preference to researchers with an established history of awards or research activity in Canada. Others required applicants to be Canadian citizens. Although there was no evidence that having such information would have dissuaded them from coming to Canada, the findings suggest that it would have facilitated more realistic expectations about their research productivity.

On a related matter, recognition of qualifications and experience was also a key theme for some participants. Indeed this is a growing concern for government policy makers in Canada, particularly with respect to medical and healthcare professionals.

One faculty member, for example, complained about the implications for his ability to practice in his area of expertise:

> Unbeknownst to myself they condemned me to six months of extra training, … They didn't communicate it to me, … so I wound up doing a year and a half of fellowship or clinical instructorship or whatever (Paul).

Another participant, James, complained that although he was permitted to train medical professionals in his area he was not allowed to practice himself. He was especially concerned about the detrimental impact it might have on his practical expertise and overall professional development. This finding echoes calls for contemporary organizations to embrace the different kinds of expertise that knowledge workers bring (Scott, 2005).

On a more positive note, senior faculty – notably the two deans who took part in the study – said that they were seeking to ensure that all candidates received realistic information about departmental expectations, as related by Lucia, below:

> I work with every candidate who comes here. I talk to them, whether they're going to get the job or not – right off the bat. And then I talk to them more, later … I want to sit down with potential faculty members and say "this is our expectation of you" and "we'll help you get there … because if we're hiring you, this is an act of faith on our part".

Indeed several other participants in the study indicated that they had been involved in recruiting international faculty and had made some attempt to avoid the problems that they had encountered during their own recruitment. They also commented on how they had tried to support newly arrived international faculty even if they had not been on the respective recruitment panel.

Provision of an RLCP – realistic non-work information
The value of providing realistic information about the local community, school, social and living conditions etc. permeated the majority of accounts. However, the findings also suggested widespread acknowledgement that the individual faculty member bears some responsibility in this regard. Thus, several participants described finding out about living conditions themselves via the internet, government and local web sites, etc. rather than relying solely on their host institution. In the absence of information from his university, Ashley, for example, actively explored schooling opportunities for his children:

> No one told me anything about schools for my kids so I investigated. I found three districts, or three divisions or three schools. I communicated with them, called them and e-mailed them. I came and registered them, I asked questions.

The perceived responsibility of the individual is reflected in Templer *et al.*'s (2006, p. 162) study introduced above, where the respective survey asked about the extent to which respondents had "gathered accurate information on various aspects of the general living conditions in the host country prior to their relocation". Responding to Templer *et al.*'s (2006) recommendation to explore organization- versus self-initiated information on living conditions, this study was based on the assumption that employers are also well-placed to provide such information. Thus, participants were also asked, unless they raised the issue themselves, about the extent to which their

institution had provided information about non-work conditions. The findings of the study indicated that the amount of information provided by host institutions differed significantly both between universities, and even between different departments or schools in the same university. For example, Anne and Ben were in the same university, yet they had quite different experiences:

> In terms of information available.... I felt, despite having done it before, how complicated it would be and the university gave me no support at all (Anne).

> I think they were actually very good when we came here and we had a lot of invitations. We met a lot of faculty people and they were quite friendly ... it's important from the very beginning that you have contact with some of the faculty people and see what Canadian life is all about (Ben).

The findings also reflected a close connection between participants' experiences and the well-being of accompanying family. This echoes findings in the expatriate management literature about the influence of the family on corporate overseas assignments (e.g. Boyer *et al.*, 2003; Cohen-Scali, 2003; Selmer and Leung, 2003; Valcour and Tolbert, 2003). Indeed, the majority of faculty in this study said that having information about the social context of the respective position was essential for family well-being, as evidenced by Toby, below:

> I feel they have a duty to inform people about opportunities for schooling. But I asked specifically about it and the department head told me the wrong information. I would assume that he did so because he didn't care, I would not have come here at all [had I known].

Other concerns related to the accuracy of information about employment opportunities for partners:

> It was very hard for her to feel sure that this was the right place to move to. She was completely convinced that we had no future in staying there [the previous institution]. But, she was very concerned about whether she would be successful here (Nick).

One participant expressed concerns about the impact that the move to Canada had had on his wife, a health professional. He noted that in the absence of accurate information about employment opportunities and recognition of her qualifications she had accepted a salary that was only a quarter of what she earned in Australia. Peter, a senior academic who had moved to Canada with his wife, also reported that inaccurate information about employment opportunities had caused much frustration and problems with adjustment for his wife and for the family as a whole. As a further note, five participants linked the need for detailed realistic and relevant information about social conditions with their own professional development and productivity. Evan, for example, explained that he had spent "excessive" time and energy resolving financial and immigration problems which had distracted him from his research agenda. This finding is important because it points, again, to the need for a more holistic approach to the recruitment of internationally mobile knowledge workers.

Discussion

The primary objective of this paper was to explore international faculty experiences of recruitment and, in particular, the degree to which they were provided with an RJP and an RLCP. This objective also allowed for an insight into the value of providing an RJP

and an RLCP for internationally mobile knowledge workers more generally. Although the two concepts were initially understood as separate, the findings suggested that the boundaries between them are blurred. Participants tended towards a more holistic understanding of the recruitment process, where information about their position and their social context was inextricably entwined. To that extent, the paper extends the findings of Templer *et al.*'s (2006) study to internationally mobile knowledge workers who elect to take a position independently. It also signals the need for a more integrated approach to provision of RJPs and RLCPs. The contemporary expatriate management literature acknowledges the need for "expatriate packages" to provide for such things as housing and travel allowances for employees and their families who are sent on an overseas assignment. Thus, for example, "hardship allowances" are provided for employees sent to geographically remote or socially and politically unstable locations. This approach clearly acknowledges the need for a more integrated approach to expatriate assignments that takes into consideration living conditions as well as the specific position responsibilities. Drawing on the findings presented here, our contention is that an integrated approach is also required for individuals who elect to go overseas independently.

Where international faculty are concerned, the paper suggests that detailed and accurate information about position roles and responsibilities, tenure and promotion criteria and research facilities and funding critical. This finding emphasizes the importance that knowledge workers, such as faculty, attach to opportunities for self- and professional development. Indeed a major concern for the tenured and untenured faculty in this study was that having access to realistic information about these dimensions of their position would have facilitated their productivity and professional development.

The paper has emphasized the need to provide international recruits with realistic information about the social context of their respective position. This finding supports and extends Templer *et al.*'s (2006) recommendation for internationally mobile professionals to have a minimum understanding of their prospective living conditions. A key concern for faculty in this study was the need to ensure the well-being of accompanying spouses/partners and children. This finding is especially pertinent in a context where faculty members are increasingly likely to have spouses or partners who are working professionals (Didion, 1996). Indeed, Wolf-Wendel *et al.* (2003, p. 4) contend that "academic institutions have a lot to gain by paying attention to the needs of dual-career couples". This study supports that contention and specifically identifies the need for non-work factors to be a key component in international recruitment practices. Although Templer *et al.* (2006, p. 168) contend that an RLCP "may facilitate adjustment to the day-to-day routines in the foreign assignment", our findings suggest that information about non-work factors may impact on individual work adjustment and related performance. Indeed, several faculty in this study described how their professional activities and achievements were interrupted by problems they had had to resolve regarding immigration, housing and schooling.

Caught up in what is now an increasingly competitive academic marketplace, universities may be tempted to overplay the positive dimensions of a faculty position and its social context. This may be particularly likely given that "organizations engage in recruitment to attract potential employees and to get them to accept offers of

employment" (Connerly *et al.*, 2002, p. 22). This paper cautions against such an approach, particularly given the implications for employee morale, retention and performance. Indeed faculty in this study who had been given more realistic information and told about the negative and positive dimensions of their position and living conditions expressed appreciation. While emphasizing the need for realistic and accurate information about work and non-work issues, we acknowledge the essentially subjective nature of what constitutes realistic recruitment practices. Thus, as evidenced in this paper, certain themes or items of information were more valuable to some participants than others. Faculty with working partners, for example, emphasized the importance of information about opportunities in their partner's area of expertise. The price of housing may be especially significant for junior faculty who have only recently joined the job market. Junior faculty at the beginning of their careers were also particularly concerned about tenure and promotion policies. This finding suggests the need for recruiters to be sensitive to individual differences and specific aspects of the individual's life, e.g. spouse, family and career-stage, etc. (McBey and Karakowsky, 2000). It also explicitly recognizes that recruitment is essentially a social process (Illes, 1999; Lievens *et al.*, 2002).

Foot (2006) suggests that most Canadian universities are seeking to recruit new, junior untenured faculty. However, the findings presented here indicate that realistic recruitment is also important for more senior and/or tenured faculty. Understanding faculty as exemplars of internationally mobile knowledge workers provides an explanation for this finding because it explains participants' need for a realistic understanding of their position and its social context in order to ensure their continued professional development and learning. Indeed, our findings suggest that a more integrated approach to recruitment is likely to impact positively on productivity and performance by shaping realistic expectations, and supporting achievable levels of professional development and learning. Yet, we also acknowledge the need for individual proactivity. Indeed, several participants in this study said that individual proactivity was critical. This finding suggests that international recruitment practices should be characterized by a combined effort on the part of the employer and the prospective employee.

A more holistic and integrated approach to recruitment would also consider the issue of timing in presentation of information. Given the amount of personal and professional preparation required in making an overseas move, it would be useful to obtain access to such information mid-stream in the recruiting process, i.e. after the initial screening process but before any job offers are extended or accepted (Phillips, 1998). This would allow the applicant to formulate a realistic impression of the respective employment opportunity and locale, before a final decision is made. Participants who expressed positive views about their recruitment experiences suggested examples of how to supply the requisite information. For example, "live" previews allow for interactive question and answer sessions that are associated with high "honesty" scores from job applicants (Saks and Cronshaw, 1990). Although some participants in this study were provided with detailed booklets and other printed matter, this material may be left unread and/or is open to misinterpretation. Other suggestions include work samples and simulations that provide behavioral snap-shots of the types of valid work and life situations likely to be faced by applicants (Reilly

et al., 1981). "Decision-making training" (Ganzach *et al.*, 2002) is a further option which offers individuals an opportunity to use a "balance sheet" for weighing positive and negative aspects of taking an overseas position.

Returning to the theme of individual proactivity, the majority of universities, organizations, and levels of government operate web sites that the international recruit can access. Yet, such information is also open to misinterpretation. Indeed, given the increasingly competitive job marketplace, many institutional and organizational web sites provide a convenient medium to "sell" a position. In this context, it is important that information about faculty positions includes routing to full texts of collective agreements, university policies and procedures as well as to information about the social context. This initiative may be especially important for recruiting international faculty or other groups of internationally mobile professionals who have only limited direct knowledge of their potential work and social locale.

The themes discussed in this paper encourage the use of a more holist and integrated approach to the recruitment of internationally mobile knowledge workers. We acknowledge, however, that they should be implemented alongside enlightened management practices that create and support a safe, positive, and welcoming workplace environment. Indeed, negative workplace cultures, characterized by violations of the psychological contract such as broken or unfulfilled promises and poor communication processes are likely to have deleterious effects on worker attitudes, job satisfaction, and intentions to leave an organization, irrespective of whether they take place during the recruitment phase, or at any other time (Kickul, 2001).

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