

Original Research Article

A Critical Inquiry into Orientation for Expatriate Faculty in the GCC

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: July 21, 2020

Accepted: August 22, 2020

Volume: 2

Issue: 3

KEYWORDS

Critical Applied Linguistics, TESOL, Mentoring, International Teacher Education, Teacher Induction

ABSTRACT

With increased internationalization of higher education, many institutions have adopted English as a medium of instruction (EMI). This generates an increasing demand for English language professionals, many of whom are expatriates, potentially creating cultural issues for students, institutions, and teachers. As with most new teachers, orientation programs are organized to assist in their adaptation to their new position, a more complicated undertaking due to the international nature herein. This study takes a critical view of one such program at a higher education institution (HEI) in the Middle East's Gulf States, also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), investigated through a series of semi-structured interviews with the newly-hired teachers. Several key themes emerged, engendering heightened stress amongst the teachers: official communication, settling in, permanent accommodation, use of time during orientation, and starting classes with new students. In line with other research and the literature, recommendations for orientation programs are made to address the issues arising in this study.

1. Introduction

The research will address the induction process of a group of 6 newly-hired, expatriate English teachers in a higher education institution (HEI) in the Middle Eastern Gulf States, also referred to as the GCC (Gulf Cooperative Council). From a critical perspective, the study problematizes that orientation program and explores how the process left many of the new teachers with negative feelings towards the institution and their new positions, and how that may have harmed them as individuals, with the additional potential of affecting their students. The ubiquity of orientation programs for new hires, the importance of such programs in properly preparing teachers for their jobs, and the long-lasting effect those programs can have on teachers' attitudes and the culture of the institution all necessitate such research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Applied Linguistics

Critical Applied Linguistics is an approach to applied linguistics which falls under the Critical Research paradigm, although realized in manners much broader than strictly educational research. The Critical research paradigm is characterized by a reaction and rejection of the philosophies and approaches of established paradigms. Critical applied linguistics pushes beyond the individual subjectivity of Interpretivism with a sociocultural view of "social relations as problematic", where identities and relationships are shaped by political and ideological powers outside the individual's control (Pennycook, 2001, p.6). Critical research is therefore not only concerned with explaining or showing 'what is', but is rather grounded in a compassion to demonstrate "the possibility of change" of the status quo (Poster, 1989, as cited in Pennycook, 2001, p.6-7).

Most critical researchers would have in common the following beliefs: first, that we live in a society of "asymmetries in power arrangements", which "shape (...) social practices, but do not determine them" (Giddens, 1979, as cited in Talmy, 2010, p.

28). Many in our world are in pain, and it is the duty of the critical researcher to “alleviate” that pain (Poster, 1989, as cited in Pennycook, 2001, p.6). A prime approach is Dean’s (1994) “restive problematization of the given,” which questions “taken-for-granted components of our reality”, particularly with a view as to whose interests are served by the current status quo, so that the status quo may be addressed and a better, more equitable situation established, as criticality involves research *and* action (p.4, as quoted in Pennycook, 1999, p.343).

Critical Applied Linguistics touches a wide range of topics beyond research and education with language and power as the two connective elements; most pertinent to the current study is Culture in TESOL.

2.2 Critical issues of culture in TESOL

The proliferation of English has inevitable effects by potentially altering learners’ worldview, affecting their identity and their sense of self. It may leave speakers in “a third place that is not part of any one defined culture,” neither that of a culture associated with their L1 or their L2 (Baker, 2009, p.585). Phillipson (2004) has coined terms like *lingua economica*, *lingua Americana*, and *lingua bellica* to better illustrate exactly the ideology, interests, and influence that English as a “narcotic” holds for the world (p.4). Whether it is as nefarious as Phillipson believes, there is clearly an unequal cultural relationship, with colonial or post-colonial themes in the relationship between “Western culture” and the L2 speech community (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.12). In English education, there has been a valorization of the institutions of the West, generally to the detriment of representations of “oriental/occidental” cultures (Atkinson, 1999, p.635). The reproduction of power in social institutions is a focus of Foucault (1982), who states that power “applies itself to everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him (p.212, as quoted by Atkinson, 1999, p.634). In TESOL, that diffusion of power through educational institutions is seen first in how it is taught: the most prevalent English language teaching methods are concerned with communication, incorporating “interactional and sociocultural norms” (Hymes, 1972, as cited by Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.61), which may not be accessible for certain cultures or individuals.

That English language teaching methods promote a worldview is unsurprising considering those who propagate it. English language teaching professionals are mostly “an exclusive corps of Anglo-Western TESOL practitioners,” who lack the basic knowledge of the cultures of their students or their L1 (Karmani, 2005, p.95, as quoted in Burkett, 2016, p.6). Often, when they do venture to learn about their students, there can be reductionism, culturism, or stereotyping (see Holliday, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Holliday (1999) contrasts the essentialist, or *large culture* approach that leads to such othering, with his conception of *small cultures* which are not bound by geographic or ethnic borders, are not prescriptive, but are dynamic and individualized. When addressing sociocultural factors in TESOL, Atkinson (1999) similarly refers to *individuals-in-context* (p.648). Seeing students as individuals with multiple identities and cultural memberships is a key aspect of Atkinson’s (1999) *six principles of culture* for TESOL teachers.

2.3 Newly-hired teacher orientation programs

As the study looks critically at the preparation of English teachers for a teaching position in a new institution, the present section will review the literature on this process. The two most important concepts are *orientation* and *induction*: Mish (1986) defines orientation as an “introduction to an unfamiliar situation, an activity of a new kind; a *program* set up for the benefit of new employees (p.832, as quoted by Robinson, 1998, p.3). Robinson (1998) also stipulates that, as a process for new teachers, orientation begins with a teacher’s preparation or preservice experience and continues until one starts teaching (p.3). The definition of induction is similar: “exposure to something unknown” (Mish, 1986, p.815, as quoted by Robinson, 1998, p.3); however, induction as a process in the teaching profession subsumes the orientation, as well as programs for support and guidance, and can extend past even the teacher’s first year in a new position or school (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p.28).

According to Huling-Austin (1986, 1988, as cited by Huling-Austin, 1988, pp.4-5), Induction programs are typically formalized and have the following five goals:

- a. To improve teaching performance,
- b. To increase the retention of promising beginning teachers during the induction years,
- c. To promote the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers,
- d. To satisfy mandated requirements related to induction and certification,
- e. To transmit the culture of the system to beginning teachers.

Gregory (1998) offers a modification, most importantly that the goals happen “as quickly as possible” (as cited in Robinson, 1998, p.3).

Both approaches draw on Zey’s (1984) mutual benefits model, which comes from social exchange theory, and states that both parties engage in the activity because they both benefit, and they remain in the relationship as long as they both continue to benefit (as cited by Ingersoll & Strong 2011, p.203). The most obvious and researched advantages for institutions include a higher retention rate of teachers, as well as better teaching amongst those who stay in the profession. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) use data from National Center for Educational Statistics’ (NCES) *Schools and Staffing Survey*; controlling for variables such as teacher education and school poverty level, they show that in 1999-2000 school year, the likelihood that a teacher receiving no induction support would leave the profession was 40%, while those receiving multiple induction components had a turnover probability of just 28%, a number which dropped in relation to the amount of induction teachers received. Feiman-Nemser, et al. (1999) review several studies (e.g. Huling-Austin, 1990; Gold, 1996; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999) which also show that induction has a positive effect on attrition.

What leads to teacher turnover in many cases is dissatisfaction with the job and the teaching. At many schools there is a “sink or swim” mentality where new teachers are thrown into the classroom with little contextual preparation (Hope, 1999, p.54). While independence and relative freedom draw many individuals to the teaching profession, “the obverse is isolation” (Knight & Trowler, 2000, p.73), a condition which strikes newcomers more harshly than others (Ingersoll, 2012, p.47). An effective induction program gives teachers the tools and the personal belief to persevere and succeed (Hope, 1999, p.54). In comparing teachers receiving induction and those who have not, several studies reviewed in both Huling-Austin (1988) and Ingersoll and Strong (2004) indicate that new teachers receiving induction either perform better in class (observed) or have students with higher scores on standardized tests.

Schools and students both benefit when teachers feel supported and have positive experiences; most important for teachers, however, is they benefit by learning about and settling into the new workplace and its culture. As noted decades earlier, Lortie (1975) observed that it is very difficult for new teachers to understand and integrate into the culture of a school without a formal induction process (as cited by Kardos et al., 2001, p.255). Cunningham and Murray (2004) pinpoint socialization and meeting expectations as key objectives for induction programs in American community colleges if the goal is to generate job satisfaction and higher job performance amongst new faculty. The best induction programs welcome new teachers into “a community of practice where teachers, working together, clarify the meaning of standards and their implications for improved teaching and learning in day-to-day interactions with students and colleagues,” with a focus on their students and their needs because “some of the most important knowledge they (new teachers) need is *local*” (Feiman-Nemser et al. 1999, pp.15,17)(my emphasis).

To help teachers settle in and acquaint themselves with the standards and culture of their new institution, induction programs can consist of any number of activities. Some of the most common are as follows: “orientation sessions, faculty collaborative periods, meetings with supervisors, developmental workshops, extra classroom assistance, reduced workloads, and, especially, mentoring,” all serving to give the new teacher “a local guide” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p.203). Mentoring does stand out as perhaps the most critical aspect of the induction process for teachers to adapt to their new situation swiftly and fully (Bean, Hyers & Lucas, 2011). Also called “peer-coaches” or “buddies” among others, mentors combat the feeling of isolation encountered by many new teachers as long as the relationship that is built between the mentor and the mentee is characterized by “availability,” “frequency,” and “two-way communication” (Robinson, 1998, p.7). Efforts to ensure a positive, equitable relationship can nullify the main criticism of mentorships, and that is the unequal power relationship where the senior faculty member holds all the power, a state which is not “communal but rather, hierarchical in nature” (Rodriguez & Sjoström, 2000, p.9, as quoted by Savage, Karp & Logue, 2004, p. 22). Although mentoring may be the most popular and commonly associated part of the induction process, for it to be effective it must be included in “packages” or “bundles” of support given to new teachers (Ingersoll, 2012, p.50).

Although induction programs are typically designed for any newcomer to an institution or school district, much of the literature focuses on teachers who are new to the profession; although newly-hired, experienced teachers may face many of the same difficulties, they will have their own background to rely on, so it is worthwhile to explore their induction experiences. Studies are also predominantly based in the United States investigating primary and secondary schools and school districts, so it should be beneficial to examine the international setting at an institution of higher education in the

Middle East, especially as this small-scale study, as opposed to the mostly large-scale, positivist research before, instead relies almost exclusively on qualitative data with a critical agenda.

The research agenda is informed by critical theories of language, literacy, and communication in workplace and professional settings. Pennycook (2001) describes this domain of Critical Applied Linguistics as a series of “approaches to these contexts of communication (that) focus far more on questions of access, power, disparity, and difference” (p.19). More specifically, induction programs and treatment of new employees can be viewed as emblematic of the “new work order” under “new capitalism,” as HEIs are more often coming under the auspices of managerialism (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, as cited by Pennycook, 2001, p.19). Still, the situation for most employees is multi-dimensional, so beyond the view of these employees as vulnerable individuals, there is also their professional practice to consider, most importantly their relationships with students in classrooms which “represent ‘border crossings’ between culture and communities” (Giroux 1997, as quoted by Breen, 2007 p.1079). In light of that role, there are critical issues connected to the preparation teachers receive concerning their knowledge base and what may be missing, in this case: curricular knowledge, contextual knowledge, and process knowledge (Roberts, 1998, as cited by Troudi, 2005, p.122). Therefore, a critical analysis of teacher induction must investigate not only the treatment of teachers but also their introduction to the local context: “the sociocultural worlds into which learners are appropriated (...) shaping their language and cognitive abilities and, more generally, their cultural beliefs about the language and their identities as language users” (Hall, 2013, p.72).

2.4 Research Context

This study focuses on a cohort of six English teachers (part of a larger group of inductees) at an HEI in the Gulf States. Total enrollment is around 2000. The language of instruction is English, and these teachers would be tasked with either foundations-level teaching for first-year students or English for Academic/Specific Purposes courses for upper-class students. Although the men’s and women’s campuses are adjacent, the students are taught separately; however, teachers are not segregated, nor are they restricted to teaching the same sex.

The teachers arrived in the country two weeks prior to the start of the semester. During the first week, they were kept together throughout, and they had several orientation meetings, signed official contracts and met with Human Resources, were led around the city for the purposes of obtaining a bank account, a mobile phone sim card, a residence Visa (with medical check-up), and to search for housing (as the HEI does not provide accommodation but rather a stipend in the form of an interest-free advance). In the second week, there were further orientation meetings, as well as institution-wide faculty meetings extending over two days, and finally, a one-day professional development program on the last day of the week. The teachers began teaching after that, all with a normal workload but in the form of a one-year probation period.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research questions

The study consists of an analysis of orientation sessions and documentation, questionnaires regarding those sessions for the participants, and individual interviews with the participants centered on the questionnaires and their responses. The research questions that will be addressed in those interviews are as follows:

- a. What were the difficulties that the teachers experienced with the induction process?
- b. What effect did problems with the induction process have on the teachers and potentially their students?
- c. What needs to be changed in the induction process to be fairer and to better prepare teachers to work in this context?

3.2 Research Methodology

In one approach to critical research, Dean (1994) posits a problematizing practice to research that “is unwilling to accept the taken-for-granted components of our reality and the ‘official’ accounts of how they came to be the way they are” (p.4, as quoted by Pennycook, 1999, p.343). A key aspect of critical theory is self-criticality and realizing the limits of my own knowledge and objectivity (Spivak, 1993, p.25 as cited in Pennycook, 2001, p.8). Thus this research will not be concerned with producing new theories or generalizations but will, through its exploratory and critical nature, attempt to address the harm experienced by the participants (and potentially their students) with the objective of providing a framework for change that will also benefit the HEI and others.

3.3 Research participants and ethical considerations

The participants are all native-speaker TESOL professionals and holders of master's degrees. The majority have more than ten years' experience of working in higher education in international settings, with all but one having previously worked in the Middle East. Four of the teachers participated in the full orientation, while two arrived a week later. Despite any personal associations, each was asked to read and sign a consent form. Participants were also made clear that participation is voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time, and that they were guaranteed confidentiality. All reasonable steps were taken to ensure their comfort and convenience, and to avoid harm during the interview and transcription process (Richards, 2003). The time and location of interviews were established in conjunction with participants individually, deferring to each regarding their own preferences.

As the research involves investigating the effectiveness of the orientation program, as well the effect on teachers' practice and personal life, some emotional stress may be evoked if teachers recall an especially negative experience. However, the participants were free not to answer questions if they felt uncomfortable with any topics. Participants were audio recorded with their permission, and those recordings were transcribed by the researcher only. All audio material was being kept in a secured cloud server under password and was deleted upon completion of the study. The transcriptions were kept digitally under password, recorded via a pseudonym, and will only be kept beyond the life of the study with participants' permission (Pring, 2014). Those randomly assigned pseudonyms are also used to refer to participants in the paper.

3.4 Research methods

Semi-structured interviews are a common research instrument in critical studies, causing some conflation with the interpretive paradigm. Despite the similarity in instruments, critical interviews have a different agenda but still must be part of "systematic, theoretically justifiable, and credible" research (Troudi, 2015, p.90). A critique of interviews collecting qualitative data is that of *co-construction* (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p.322, as cited by Mann, 2010, p.4) where the interviewer can lead participants in "confessional revelations" in a manner that has ethical implications; as a remedy, however, Mann (2010) advocates a mixed-methods approach with "interviews to support other data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaires)," a practice adopted in this study (p.8). Nonetheless, interviews were the primary instrument in the study because they "capture rich and complex details" and provide "thick descriptions" of participants' views and insider meanings (Dörnyei, 2007, pp.37-38).

Based on the research questions, a questionnaire and interview questions were prepared. The questionnaire contains close-ended questions pertaining to participants' feelings before, during, and after the orientation session, using a Likert Scale of 1 (*very negative*) to 5 (*very positive*), with a *neutral* response, although there is some debate over such an inclusion (Greener 2011) The interview questions are similarly chronological, with a mix of structured and open-ended questions (Greener 2011); however, during the interview, the researcher decides the order and form of the questions actually asked, keeping the encounter "conversational and situational" (Patton 1980, p. 206, as quoted in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011, p. 413). Prior to beginning the research, the questionnaires and interview format were piloted with two different teachers similar to the participants (Turner 2010), leading to an overhaul of the questionnaire and a few changes in interview questions.

Together with the general orientation materials, schedule, and interview questions, questionnaires were distributed in advance of the interviews so that participants could spend some time remembering the sessions and reflecting on their experiences, as the orientation was more than six months earlier. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires prior to meeting for the interview, although not all did. In cases where teachers had not completed the questionnaires beforehand, there were left alone for 5 to 10 minutes with the induction materials to allow them the freedom to reflect and respond. Participants were then asked to talk about their experiences prior to arriving for the orientation, during the orientation, as well as parts of the academic year. Interviews took between 25 to 35 minutes, with one 5-minute follow-up interview after the data was compiled and analyzed. The final interviews were ultimately transcribed, and participants were also asked to review the transcriptions for member checking.

3.5 Approach to analysis

Firstly, many incorrectly believe that qualitative research does not use numbers; however, Perry (2005, p.75) disagrees: "A number of qualitative studies involve numbers in the form of frequencies of occurrence of certain phenomena." In this case, numbers are useful to measure the frequency of negative compared to positive feelings in the participants. The coding for the questionnaire responses was built into the survey itself (see Cohen et al., 2011). The background and basic context for each participant received *attribute* coding, since this method is used to log "basic descriptive information" (Saldana, 2009, p.

55). Individual responses regarding attitudes received *descriptive* codes, and are organized via *pattern* codes “into smaller and more meaningful units” (Punch, 2009, p.176).

Recordings for each interview were transcribed, which is important to note is an imperfect and selective transformation (Kvale, 1996, p.167, as cited by Cohen et al., 2011, p.426). After additional approval was granted by participants, those transcriptions were entered into the NVivo computer program to assist in coding. Based on the interview question categories, the content of each interview was initially coded *structurally*, as Saldana (2009, p. 66) states that this method is driven by research questions and topic to enable more detailed subsequent coding. Once organized structurally, with additional reflection, those portions were then coded similarly to the questionnaires with *pattern* coding (Punch, 2009, p.176).

3.6 Research Limitations

Interviewees in the study are colleagues and peers, so there is the possibility that I may have implicitly directed them in my questions or that they may have been responding based on what they thought I wanted to hear (Richards, 2003). An additional issue with the interview process was that it relied on teachers’ memories of the orientation process and their teaching, rather than periodically observing and interviewing participants throughout the year from the beginning. This is also an issue in teachers’ memories of their classes and the effects on their students: this problem was addressed in using both questionnaires and interviews but could have been more fully avoided by also using observations, following Denscombe’s (2014) advice on multiple methods and *triangulation* of data.

4. Results and Discussion

It is important to note that the participants were actually quite positive about parts of the induction process, most notably the arrangements for and logistics to the city, the hotel accommodation during the two-week orientation, Human Resource’s job of facilitating contracts, Visas, and other legal paperwork, as well as the help they received from other teachers. However, after analysis, several problematic themes arose: *communication and uncertainty, settling in, permanent accommodation, use of time*, as well as *classes and students*.

4.1 Communication and uncertainty

Issues with communication began almost immediately for most of the participants, as three marked *negative* for the question concerning the hiring process, two marked *neutral*, with one not commenting. When explaining this, it was the lack of communication that frustrated most of them. Caleb remarked on not getting questions answered and the stress that entailed. Mel called it “incredibly stressful” trying to juggle responsibilities in her former job and complete the process with a lack of information due to the fact that the HR person handling her case went on vacation:

“It was incredibly stressful. (...) They also didn’t clearly communicate to me, I felt, that they had to have my attested degree, the scanned copy of it, before they could process my security clearance and Visa. (...) Until I got the security clearance, it wasn’t confirmed that I had got the job, that’s what they tell you. So until I got that, I couldn’t give notice.” (Mel)

It is clear to see how such uncertainty before arriving could color a new employee’s opinion of the institution, particularly as it seemed to involve having to burn bridges with their former employer.

During the orientation there was considerable stress for the participants because neither were they given a full schedule nor were they told what their responsibilities were throughout the orientation period. Caleb, talking about the frustration during a busy period:

“You know, we had a countdown on the hotel, so (...) I think they could have been a bit more clear, like, ‘We need you from this time to this time,’ whereas we didn’t feel like we knew. (...) Yeah, it could have been better organized in terms of communicating where we had to be and at what time.” (Caleb)

Here we see how many of the issues intertwined and the confusion of the lack of a full schedule and list of responsibilities combined with the looming housing issue caused heightened frustration and stress.

As the semester approached and participants were becoming more and more focused on their new jobs and teaching, many were very frustrated at how little they could find out about their classes and their new subjects. Kelly described being completely in the dark about most aspects:

“I was asking team leaders who have been here for years, and they don’t even know what’s going on, and they just kept telling me, ‘I don’t know. I don’t know. We’re in the same boat.’ (...) They could have helped me more with the actual classroom, what to expect, what to expect with the students, but I don’t think anyone knew what our program was.” (Kelly)

Here Kelly demonstrates a lack of introduction to the classroom context and critical information needed to teach and relate to their new students, but this also shows a gulf in understanding of the difficulties of the new teachers. Being “in the same boat” suggests that their situations are similar; however, it should be expected that new teachers could feel much more in the dark with a dearth of information and therefore out of sorts because they are unfamiliar with the culture of the institution and the administrative processes at the beginning of a new academic year.

Finally, Hannah also showed the gulf of understanding for the needs and questions of new teachers, revealing a great deal of frustration at the lack of guidelines given to teachers:

“Where do I go to get information? What do I do if I have a student with learning disabilities - how do I access that information? Is there, not cross-curricular, cross-departmental...? Are we allowed to share information like that? Can we have meetings to discuss students?” (Hannah)

Both of the previous quotes from Kelly and Hannah illustrate that the new employees needed more proactive guidance during the orientation, and much of the consternation that developed and snowballed during the period could have been avoided.

4.2 Settling in

All but one of the teachers mentioned being warmly welcomed by the teachers seated near them in the office, their co-teachers, or those conducting the same course, socialization being a very important aspect of the induction process: Regular interactions with colleagues is vital to assist in overcoming the isolation associated with new teaching positions, and “the trust that develops as collaborative relationships with colleagues grow stronger can make possible the sharing of new teaching activities and forms of pedagogy” (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p.147). In spite of this, only one participant reported having a mentor to answer questions and provide support during their early time there. Caleb said that he asked his supervisor about additional help and that this and his supervisor’s attitude were two of the most important factors in his not wanting to quit during such a frustrating time for him:

“I actually did have (Chris) assigned as my mentor. I have it in an email saying, ‘(Chris), can you please mentor (Caleb)?’ I tease him about it now, we joke around, but I have to say that if we had some other chairs I’ve seen, I think it could have been a lot worse. (...) I probably would have been looking for another job, seriously.” (Caleb)

On multiple levels, Caleb’s comments demonstrate the usefulness of mentors. Primarily, his mentor was there to help him in the initial stages of the new job, but the assignment of a mentor also helped in terms of socialization, as his quote reveals a level of comfort with a new colleague that developed, at least in part, due to the mentorship.

However, several of the participants complained that they felt taken advantage of in terms of their office space, due largely to their status as new. Caleb reported that he was asked to move workspaces in the first week because a senior faculty member wanted his seat. Wanda, Kelly, and Peter did not even have workspaces at the start of the semester, and were moved multiple times before they received a permanent place. Peter described his frustrations: “The workstations thing was handled horribly. (...) I thought that was bad; it stank of ‘new person and he’s a Westerner’, so we don’t have to care about him.” There may certainly be reasons of cultural tradition and separation of sexes at the root of Kelly and Peter’s being moved to a different part of the office, but the manner in which the entire ordeal took place left them with real feelings of bitterness. However, Mel found the lack of place most personally upsetting:

“That was the one thing that nearly made me crack. You know when you’re talking and you suddenly feel yourself starting to get a bit emotional: that was the one thing. (...) Just not having a workstation, a private place to sit, and being very much in the open, that I found quite difficult, yeah.” (Mel)

Hence, we can see the vital importance of helping new faculty members feel at home in their new workplace. The lack of a workstation might be a mere annoyance to an established employee who knows where else to sit or would be comfortable in communal areas, having already built relationships with colleagues, while for a new teacher being exposed in that way was very upsetting.

4.3 Permanent Accommodation

Different from some HEIs in the region, this institution does not provide housing, but rather a housing allowance bundled together with other benefits like travel expenses. However, the assistance that they received in searching for accommodation was a cause of stress for many of the new faculty, with four members marking *negative* or *very negative*. Several were very disappointed that the institution did not even provide contact numbers for estate agents or any guidelines about where current faculty members were living. Wanda described her apprehension at touring the city in one solid group, despite individuals having very different housing requirements:

“So that was kind of a waste of time, and then they kind of drove us around together and showed us different things when some people needed a villa and other people needed a one bedroom. (...) No one at school actually moved into those places.” (Wanda)

After finding an apartment or a villa, the HEI negotiates the terms of the lease and, as a single check covering the entire year’s rent is standard practice in this region, even provides an interest-free loan, a positive policy that is not standard in the region. Nonetheless, there were problems with slow response and delays with delivery, causing a great deal of discomfort for participants relying on this service yet nearing the end of the orientation period and their time in the hotel. Caleb described his experience:

“Yeah, a lot of stress! And your family needs a place to stay; (...) I didn’t want to be spending out of my pocket. I think (the director) was quite verbally supportive; he came in and was like, ‘Yeah, don’t worry; we’ll take care of you. We’ll do all that kind of stuff.’ But again, it was like you can’t take that to the bank, just to extend it (the time in the hotel).” (Caleb)

In Caleb’s case, as well as the next two (Mel and Wanda), it is possible to see the beginnings of issues of trust and identifying with the institution, which are contrary to the purposes of induction. Despite the director’s assurances, Caleb said that no actual efforts were made to address his situation. Several participants discussed how delays with the check extended into the semester and their time teaching, situations which suggest a lack of understanding for the new employees’ circumstances on the part of the institution. Mel remembered being quite stressed waiting for the check without much information on it:

“When I had a problem with the check because it took two weeks to come. That was the biggest problem and the biggest stress. (...) The landlord and the agency giving me problems, which then delayed the delivery of furniture and electronics, and having to pay for that. *That was very stressful!*” (Mel)

Wanda had to depend on a colleague for an alternative place to stay because of problems with the delivery of her rent check: “I stayed with (colleague) because (colleague)’s check got processed and not lost, but that was kind of stressful because (...) I wasn’t in my apartment when classes started. (...) You can’t focus on your teaching when you don’t have a place to live!” She even admits that the external situation had an effect on her teaching. With this situation, it is clear that participants’ personal lives and the issues there can affect their professional practice and their attitudes towards their new job. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) state just how important our emotional health can be in a new situation: “Our emotions can alter our beliefs about others and the situations in which we find ourselves. Our emotions influence what we perceive about ourselves and others and the meanings we give to those perceptions” (p.124).

4.4 Use of time

Largely because of the need to find housing, participants were greatly concerned with how the time was allotted during the orientation. In fact, five participants marked *negative* for the question, “How productive was the use of time during the two-week orientation process?” In interviews, participants were frustrated that some things took longer or could have been set up sooner: Caleb described going with the entire group to get mobile phone SIM cards:

“The things we were actually doing, they were all right, but they weren’t valuing my time, that I had other things to do. Like at (Internet/Mobile Phone Company), where we were sitting around and not doing anything for a long time, so it’s not like I had a problem with being there, but I had a problem not being somewhere else. I don’t think they fully understand, maybe, and fully care.” (Caleb)

Such sentiments do not portend a positive working relationship between the faculty member and the institution. Communication was at the heart of this issue, as well. It was the uncertain organization of parts of the process and the surprise of the faculty-wide meeting that were unsettling for several participants. Hannah talked about the lack of balance between the learning what she needed for her job and being required to attend all-day meetings:

“So, just little things that teachers need to get through their day-to-day routine, I would have much rather spent time on that. (...) I would have much rather been here, get on the computer, wander around, figure out where things were, to not get lost.” (Hanna)

Hannah’s comments reveal the necessity to involve teachers more in the orientation program in order to determine more what new teachers need and to better tailor the program to teachers’ actual experiences so as to improve their classroom practices in their new contexts.

4.5 Classes and students

For the induction process, the two main elements of the teaching is the preparation received beforehand and how the teaching progressed in the beginning of the semester. While teachers acquainted with the status quo at the HEI may be able to better deal with uncertainty, new teachers are not. Kelly described the questions that could not be answered:

“So schedules? ‘I don’t know.’ How many students? ‘I don’t know.’ Can I get a class list? ‘I don’t know.’ Which room? ‘I don’t know. Check again; it’ll change.’ What’s the code for the eBook? ‘I don’t know.’ Do the students have the book? ‘I don’t know.’ Nobody knew anything coming in.” (Kelly)

Kelly’s issues also show the importance of understanding the practical needs of teachers during the orientation, also remedied by tapping current teachers’ knowledge more effectively.

Peter talked about having time to prepare for classes, and doing so, only to have the class changed in the first week and needing to start over:

“You only knew on the morning you got here what your time table’d be, so that was rubbish. (...) I stayed here until 8pm one night the first day preparing this (course) stuff, only to like go in the next morning to teach them and be moved off because somebody else wanted to teach (this course) instead of (that course).” (Peter)

Unfortunately, such a situation of being placed with difficult groups or courses is a typical, according to Huling-Austin (1988).

She states, “Beginning teachers are often placed in teaching assignments that would challenge even the most skillful veteran teachers” including “working with low-ability or unmotivated/disruptive students” (Huling-Austin 1988, p.20). Caleb had a similar situation with being moved from desirable courses and groups to different subjects, but it was all made much worse with scheduling problems that created awkward situations in class and severely limited his possibilities to prepare materials:

“I had 15 minutes to prepare for them, and it was nothing close to what I thought it was going to be, and that’s the worst feeling as a teacher to go into a class, and you don’t know what’s going on; you don’t know what to expect; you don’t know what to do, like you’re wasting the first day; it sets a bad precedent for how you’re going to run the class.” (Caleb)

As can be seen, despite the fact that they were in their first month of working in new positions, both teachers were already developing negative attitudes towards the HEI because of disorganization and the discomfort it began to generate, particularly regarding their professional identities.

In the orientation program, there was a session on cultural sensitivity but not much beyond that, which can be problematic: Dewey (1938) “expressed his belief that subject matter should not be learned in isolation, and that education should begin with student experience and should be contextual” (cited by Breunig, 2005, p.108). However, as most of the participants had taught in the Middle East before and had many years of experience, none of them considered that a problem, although several repeated themes of uncertainty well into the semester and of being surprised in the classroom in the early stages of the semester. Mel said that they hadn’t received anything useful in the orientation about what to expect in the class and the effect that had further into the semester:

“I think the level of motivation and concentration and the overall attitude towards study was a big shock, (...) and I think the negative impact happened, as well, the kind of cumulative impact happened when I had that (difficult) class, and I was really irritable, really got annoyed quickly, so I think the two kind of fed into each other.” (Mel)

This quote again demonstrates the connectedness of the issues in the orientation program, but it also shows the importance to familiarize the teachers with the students’ context for the teachers’ sake, both as professionals and individuals, showing the effect that emotions can have on perceptions and ultimately on performance (Buzzelli & Johnson, 2002).

Wanda discussed having issues with attendance and lateness, as well as information about her students that would have helped her better relate to her students before starting her classes:

“I learned as I went a little bit, like how big their families are, which is nice, but using that in a positive way in the lessons. That sometimes girls are late to class because of people who are driving them, so understanding that with attendance issues might be a little better, too.” (Wanda)

In Wanda’s case, she seemed to be looking for more of the critical cultural content that Troudi (2005) discusses, in order to understand her students and their sociocultural worlds, and thus understand how to teach them more effectively, echoing Feiman-Nemser et al.’s (1999) declaration that understanding the local context is one of the most important aspects of an induction program.

Caleb also had a difficult time with the attendance system, with real consequences for the students due to the lack of clarity or communication for the new faculty:

“All the other students were away on work placement. I was marking them absent for the first week, and it came back to them at the end of the semester because these guys were on work placement; they came back for the second half of the semester, and a bunch were already on attendance warning, and they didn’t fix it then, and so a few guys got kicked out of the, like, automatically, the system kicks them out (of the course).” (Caleb)

As can be seen, Caleb was not acquainted well enough with the culture of the institution to know when to follow rules strictly and when not to, and also needed more instruction in Roberts’ (1998) process knowledge to understand the work placement programs that many students participate in and how that affects attendance (as cited in Troudi, 2005, p.122).

While participants generally said that their supervisors were helpful when asked, most also said that there was not much active support for their teaching through the first semester and beyond. On that topic, responses included: “I had to go looking for answers.” “They didn’t have any follow-up.” “I haven’t had a lot of contact (...) since the orientation period.” It illustrates the importance of recognizing teachers’ own agency in their socialization, yet such a hands-off approach can lead to increased feelings of isolation and have effects on teaching efficacy (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004), creating unnecessary injury for teachers and their students.

5. Conclusion

Through analysis, it is clear that shortcomings in the induction process have real effects in teachers’ wellbeing, students’ educational experiences, the culture of the institution, and potentially teacher turnover, meaning even greater costs for the HEI in the long run (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In light of Eisner’s (2002) belief that critical theorists should not simply criticize but also attempt to guide schools in improving their practices (as cited in Breunig 2015, p.110), I have prepared a list of recommendations for the institution that address many of the overarching problems that the new teachers experienced during their induction:

- a. Open lines of communication with new teachers before they arrive, first with one individual who will be responsible for their orientation and can be a point of contact throughout the process. Additionally, give them a direct line to their supervisors in their departments to concretely establish early what they will teach, so that they can prepare in advance.
- b. Produce a more complete orientation packet, including a full schedule and a clearer list of the responsibilities and tasks for new teachers during the orientation session. Confer with current teachers to use their knowledge of the difficulties that new teachers experience to provide advice.
- c. Generate a more complete profile of the students and local culture, including “short fact sheets about key information about sports, literature and film” (Burkett, 2016, p.10). Teachers can also contribute their experiences in the classroom to give new hires a better picture of what to expect; however, teachers must be given the freedom to be truthful so that these accounts are accurate. Attempt to engage students to contribute themselves, and thus give a more contextual introduction to the real job.
- d. Begin the process of helping teachers find accommodation before they arrive. Liaise with current teachers to develop a map of the city with pictures of neighborhoods and the concentration of faculty members’ homes, along with a list of estate agents that teachers can contact themselves. When teachers have found accommodation, expedite their rent checks to allow new teachers enough time to become settled before the semester begins.
- e. Assign each new hire a veteran teacher to oversee their progress, give them guidance, and answer any questions that they might have prior to arriving and well into their first year. Mentors need to be chosen carefully, given guidance in the how to fulfill their role, and remain in place through teachers probationary period and potentially beyond (Bean et al., 2011). The role does not necessarily need to be termed a mentor, as there can be some awkwardness amongst colleagues.

- f. The current system is causing some harm to new teachers at their most vulnerable, which negatively effects institutional culture and can have implications in faculty turnover. It also has ramifications for students, who may not be receiving the full benefit of knowledgeable, engaged, and positive teachers, a problem that a more comprehensive and supportive orientation program can address (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). It must become a collaborative, long-term undertaking. In the future, research into new teacher induction can more closely examine approaches by administrators and the content of the orientation sessions, as well as observe teachers' classes, following them further into the academic year in order to develop a more complete picture of induction from multiple perspectives. Ultimately, any such research should work to build a more complete framework for effective induction, benefitting all involved: teachers, administrators, and students.

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