A STUDY OF TEACHER INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A UK ADULT ESOL EDUCATIONAL SETTING

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Original Article

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Abstract

Responsible for preparing migrant learners for the workplace and higher education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutors in the UK face many challenges in their induction and professional growth. This qualitative case study inquired into the workplace induction and development experiences of Adult ESOL teachers in the research setting. The study also examined the potential for implementing a communities-of-Practice framework to support and develop the tutors. The challenges faced by the tutors ranged from the piecemeal nature of work in the Adult ESOL sector, compensation offered on the basis of instructional hours and work assignments across multiple sites in the city which left the tutors with little incentive or opportunity to engage in collegial development at work. In addition, the burden of government-mandated documentation of teaching and stream of reforms as well as the demanding nature of work with linguistically and socially-constrained migrant learners frustrated the teachers. The study recommends that the local managers must translate government policies and reforms at the micro-level of the ESOL workplace more effectively. Additionally, they should promote teacher involvement in local level decision-making.

Keywords: Education, ESOL, Teacher education, Induction, development, ESL

Introduction

The initial period of teachers' entry into the profession as practitioners is highly formative, thus highlighting the strong need for the workplace to establish effective structures for smooth induction (Goldrick, 2009, p.3-4). Teacher induction is essential because what learners learn is affected by the way teachers teach which is contingent upon the knowledge and skill set practitioners develop during the course of their praxis (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1013). Given the complex nature of teaching, teaching is not an easy task, particularly for novice teachers who have to regularly deal with a variety of inter-relational encounters and events (Tickle, 2000, p. 12) at work. Russell and McPherson (2001, p.4) contend that there is an urgent need to do away with the mythical notion that pre-service teacher preparation produces self-sufficient teachers capable of performing their teaching tasks without the proverbial road bumps characteristic of initial adjustment to practice.

It is argued that newly qualified teachers must be supported through the initial years of induction so as to preempt the dismantling of the images and expectations they bring to the profession (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p.457).

Tardif et al (2001, p.9) suggest that such initial support is vital to consolidating teachers' pedagogical practices and professional praxis. Given the turbulence of the teachers' early years in the profession, Feiman-Nemser (2001, p.1027) comments that novice teachers must forge robust professional identities while developing their teaching practice, thus creating the need for structures and support that can address both needs and build novice teachers' capacities. Wong (2004, p.52) defines good developmental opportunities for teachers as 'structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work'.

Teacher induction for Adult ESL/ESOL practitioners

As part of the Lifelong Skills Sector in the UK, the provision of Community ESOL or English for Speakers of other languages is regulated by the Adult Education Service (in accordance with National ESOL policy) in every city. According to Crandall (1993, p. 504, 512), irrespective of earlier preparation experiences, Adult ESL/ESOL tutors require access to professional development which maximizes teacher and learner strengths and ensures lifelong development. Such professional development also needs to be cyclic, recurrent, and prolonged (Peyton *et al.,* p.215). Chisman (2008, p.9) argues that ESL practitioners require such extended and ongoing professional development to stay abreast with the state-of-the-art developments in pedagogy and their field and to gain familiarity with new approaches to teaching and learning. Induction is a key tool in materializing such development (Flores, 2004, p.315). According to Tickle (2002, p.2), induction influences the quality of education by expanding the intellectual capacity of the teachers. Further, Ingersoll and Smith (2004, p.683) observe that induction is important as it helps newly-trained teachers to evolve into experienced and seasoned practitioners in the field. Ingersoll and Smith (2004, p.683) observe that induction programmes range from an orientation meeting to a more structured experience comprising different kinds of activities and meetings stretching over several years. Research suggests that it is important for induction to be viewed not as a one-off event but as a stage in ongoing teacher development (Goldrick, 2009, p.6; Strasbury & Zimmerman, 2000, p.4; OECD, 2005, p.13, Afzaal *et al.,* 2019).

According to Feiman-Nemser (2001, p.1031), induction should be embedded within a continuum of professional learning. Induction which is used as a band-aid or is premised on a palliative approach is too narrow in focus as it is largely remedial and not developmental (Britton, 2003, p.1).Indeed, research suggests that induction programmes (largely led by mentors) must eschew short term assistance in the form of advice, sympathy or teaching resources (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.1031; Afzaal *et al.,* 2020). Instead they must assist teachers to develop an encompassing vision of what it is to teach with a view to enabling ongoing development, professional identity formation and technical and adaptive competences that give rise to reflective practice (Lawson, 1992, p. 170).

Trends in international teacher induction

Varied induction support is available to novice teachers in many countries. For instance, an OECD report based on a survey of 25 countries under the project *Attracting Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* found that sixteen countries provided teachers with access to induction programmes (OECD, 2005, p.118). In ten of these 16 countries, induction for teachers was compulsory, although induction policy and practices in these settings reflected national and geographical variation in terms of the length of the induction. In France, Greece, Israel, Italy, UK (excluding Scotland), completing the induction programme was

required to become a fully-certified teacher, whereas in Japan, this was necessary only for permanent positions and in Switzerland completing induction depended on which cantons the teachers practiced in. The case of induction for teachers in the US reflected a similar variation in terms of whether it was mandatory for certification. The next section looks at induction practices in selected countries.

Global picture of Teacher induction

In Shanghai, teacher development is characterized by the establishment of research groups, planning lessons together and collaboration on enhancing teacher as well as student learning alike. New practitioners in Shanghai take part in workshops arranged by the district, experience mentoring and participate in pedagogical competitions and awards. These new teachers can also use district hotlines which connect them with subject matter specialists. In Switzerland, there is a great deal of attention to lifelong learning, which takes the form of developing teachers personally and professionally in a seamless transition characterized by progressing student teacher networks into novice teacher practice (groups of six members working together during induction). In Japan, beginning teachers are supported by a personal guiding teacher, with new and seasoned teachers working together in team spaces so that they can collaborate and seek help.

Induction in England

In England, all newly-qualified teachers (NQTs) within school settings must undergo a compulsory induction year for confirmation of teacher status and eligibility for teaching in state-regulated schools. Under this programme, new teachers are evaluated in terms of induction criteria which are aligned to standards used for certifying teachers and receive access to support as well as professional development comprising a reduced teaching load, advice from induction tutors, mid-term reviews, customized support and monitoring in addition to mid-term novice teacher classroom observations, evaluative meetings and a job description with 'reasonable' demands (Williams, 2003, p. 208). However, within the setting examined by this study, entrants to ESOL teaching who are certified TESOL practitioners, receive orientation/induction lasting only a few hours or a day at the most. CPD activities, and participate in workshops/short courses which are supplemented by mentoring by line managers.

Features and Components of Effective Induction

Literature Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. 2; Whisnant *et al.,* 2005, p.5; Wong 2005, p.47-48) suggests that there are many elements which contribute to effective novice teacher induction. Researchers (for e.g, Woods & Stanulis, 2009) note that these elements can range from mentoring, reflective inquiry/ teaching, systematic observations, suitable professional development, supportive school culture and a common vision of knowledge, teaching, and learning. Johnson and Scull (1999, p.43) note that traditionally the professional development of practitioners has been treated as an off-site activity which view decontextualizes their work and intensifies their lives. There is growing awareness that professional learning should not take the form of beyond work CPD training but should comprise an ongoing process (Eraut, 2001, p.11). Such professional learning needs to be embedded in the practitioners' work settings and to be mediated by collegial interaction and collaboration (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2004, p. 203) within a community of learners (Curry *et al,* 2008, p. 663; Wong, 2005, p. 53; Stoll *et al*, 2006, p.225). This review suggests that there are a number of key concepts that shape effective teacher induction. These concepts include mentoring, reflectivity and communities of practice (CoP) which require consideration when considering the case of ESOL teacher induction and development.

Research Methodology

This study was designed as an intrinsic and descriptive case study design, with the case highlighting the experiences of ESOL tutors working in the UK's ESOL and Essential Skills sector which is impacted by significant funding and provision transformations. The primary method of data collection in the study comprised in-depth qualitative interviews carried out with 8 ESOL male and female teachers with varying lengths of service in the field in order to capture the spectrum of induction and professional development experienced by them. Observational data was drawn upon for building up a picture of the tutors' work context. The study sought to address the following questions:

1. Under the impetus of the rising performativity culture in the UK ESOL sector, what are the induction and professional development experiences of teachers working in an ESOL and essential skills setting?

Results and Discussion

The analysis of interview data revealed a number of key themes which are discussed below.

Sources of tension in the workplace

The analysis showed that the work of the teachers and the support they experienced were influenced by four factors, including surveillance and control, gaps in communication, gaps in the system and shifts in policy. The interviewees reported excessive government-mandated supervision of their work which led to demands for demonstrating accountability through paperwork, the attitude of the managers, the implementation of new review mechanisms and a system of compensating teachers for contracted and logged hours of work. These left the teachers feeling greatly disempowered. Such monitoring left the participants feeling that the government did not trust the ESOL institutions to manage things on their own and tended to put 'things into place that then trickle down and then heads of service and heads of school whatever feel that they need to do this monitoring' [R1 L458-487]. Another participant felt that such monitoring also reflected the government's 'obsession of control' which 'encourag [ed] managers to keep pulling the flowers up to see how the roots are growing' thus preventing people from doing their jobs [R3 L952- 963]. Paperwork was also seen as being used as a mechanism for 'showing value for money' and demonstrating that 'numerical targets' had been met through and 'unnecessary collection of evidence' available by other means [R8 L642-653]. Tom attributed the demand for this work as arising from the 'number crunchers' rather than their immediate managers [R3 L917-928]. However, the participants felt discontented with the local managers too, observing that they tended to be 'rushed off their feet' and neither valued the 'input of the tutors at the management level' nor fostered a culture whereby the teachers were viewed as capable of contributing to the organization beyond the classroom [R1 L409-428].

The findings also confirm the existence of control over the teachers in the form of subjection to the market metaphor in education, focus on materials and competencies, bureaucratic regulation of job descriptions and pay arrangements and focus on economic efficiency of the organization (Smyth *et al.,* 2000). The drive towards accountability identified in this study appears to be driven by the government's desire to justify its funding of the adult learning sector.

The new review system was also perceived negatively, with one of the interviewees worrying that matters which could have been dealt with locally were now being written up and passed on to the senior management, thus leading to more 'record keeping' [R6 L270- 279]. This interviewee also felt that the new review which entailed a visit by the senior management team and answering questions on a form was 'unfair' and created the 'pressure of it being formalized

into a report' [R6 L270- 279]. Data analysis showed that the review system was viewed as a threat, as identifiable in the extract from the interview with Annabel below with 'a lot of tutors [feeling] threatened when they see, they see a line manager's looking through the door and they now feel threatened whereas they didn't before' [R8 L972-987].

Such a review system or system of surveillance has been anticipated by Groundwater-Smith & Sachs (2002, p.347) who note that the 'audit society' makes it necessary for 'professional practice to be auditable by creating specific performance measures' that lead it into a 'kind of meta-performativity, where standards are met for their own sake'.

The need for the teachers to calculate contact and non-contact hours as per their contract was also perceived to detract from their 'performance as professionals' and meant that teachers ended up being 'very careful about the hours one spends and one can record them' [R8 L459-463]. These findings align with observations by Darville (2002, p.63) who found that when they were interviewed, the adult education teachers often talked about the '"burden of paperwork," even when no questions have directed attention to it'. The paperwork stands for the rising demand for accountability which not only contributes to teacher stress but also diverts teachers' attention from tasks they as vital to their teaching and learners (Tusting, 2009). From the perspectives of the participants in this study, such 'textualization of the workplace' (Iedema & Scheeres, 2003) may represent 'no more than an updated surveillance and gate keeping device for management' (Gee *et a.l,* 1996 in Iedeema & Scheeres, 2003).

As another source of tensions in the workplace, the participants reported that valuable face to face communication had been replaced by impersonal emails. The 'asocial' nature of emails (Friedman & Currall, 2003, p.1329) can lead to 'more blunt and harsh' communication (Sproull & Keisler, 1991 in Moore *et al,* 1999) which in turn can give rise to workplace incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2005, p.7).The 'amazing' weekly meetings had been replaced by monthly ones which was unhelpful as the teachers lost out on 'information about what's going on outside' and 'in terms of training in terms of processes that they are going to put in place' [R7L2056-2078]. Other participants reported that this cutback in meetings could lead to a loss of 'common understanding of what the norms in teaching and in assessing' [R8 L685-700] or to poor communication due to the substitution of smaller and more manageable meetings with bigger unmanageable group meetings [R3L1186-1187]. These perceptions are in line with literature which suggests face-to-face meetings being the 'surest way to establish and nurture the human relationships underlying the business [or professional] relationships' which 'are grounded in social bonding and symbolic expressions of interest (Hinds & Kiesler, 2002, p.83).

According to the interviewees, system gaps led to the dearth of a shared vision and sense of 'strategic direction we are going in or philosophy that we are following' or where the teachers fitted in the 'jigsaw' [R3 L1724-1732], in addition to a lack of collaboration due to the 'lack of cohesion' [R1 L830-833]. It was also felt that the and a pay system based on 'logging of hours' discouraged teachers from expending unpaid time on informal collaboration [R8L422-427]. The interviewees had positive views of informal collaboration which was seen as accessing 'different points of view' on teaching [R5 L1255-1261] and bouncing ideas of people so that they could 'crystallize' [R2 L1507-1509]. These findings align with earlier studies that have shown how the dearth of a shared vision renders meaningless organizational learning (Verona, 1999), prevents ideas from reaching fruition due to lack of cohesion in the organization (Calantone *et al.,* 2002) and discourage members from building up their own visions which is beneficial for commitment to the organization (Senge, 1990, p.121).

Policy shifts were also seen as being a source of tension, with policy-mandated reorganization and decentralization leading to a weakening of contact with the teachers' line managers [R2 981-985] and preventing the scheduling of more regular team meetings to help teachers consolidate their view of what needed to be done [R8 L656-681]

Effect of the tensions on the teachers

The tensions in the workplace led teachers to experience negative feelings, distrust in professional judgment, consolidation of box-ticking culture, accumulation of unneeded evidence of performance, work replication, demotivation towards self-led professional development and communication breakdowns. The teachers reported feeling not only disempowered and undervalued but also isolated and threatened in their work. As one of the interviewees noted that the lack of managerial attention to the value the teachers could bring to the organization beyond teaching made them feel disempowered [R8L656-681]. They also felt isolated due to the restructuring of the ESOL workplace [R8L656-681] and subjected to stress due to the burden of paperwork and keeping records [R6 L983- 994]. The interviewees also felt that their professional judgement was undermined due to the new review system [R8 L972-987] and the burden of accountability-driven paper which pressured teachers to prove that they had done their work [R1 L458- 487]. This aligns with earlier literature which suggests that 'the more intense the gaze of the audit the less the trust invested in... the practitioner' with the effect that 'there is a bureaucratic rather than professional domination of expertise and practice' (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, p.341). The ESOL teachers' perceptions of a diminution of their agency resonates with earlier accounts in literature which suggest that 'Beyond avenues of limited consultation on specific issues, teachers' input into policy matters is restricted, as are teachers' social voices '(Vongalis- Macrow, 2007, p.436-437).

The analysis of data showed that a box-ticking culture had taken root in the teachers' workplace. For instance, as Amy observed that 'there's far too much monitoring from government down you know the government puts things into place that then trickle down and then heads of service and heads of school whatever feel that they then need to do this monitoring and there's all these boxes that need to be ticked' [Amy L462-472].

Paperwork was seen by the interviewees as entailing the collection of evidence that the teachers' work had been completed which was 'unnecessary' as proof for this could be collected through informal classroom visits by managers R1 L742-752]. Due to the lack of collaboration in the work setting, people tended to work on the same thing on their own, thus replicating work and wasting resources [R1L798-806]. The system of contracted hours also demotivated teachers from engaging in informal collaboration with colleagues [R8 459-463]. The analysis also found that communication in the workplace was poor with increasing reliance on digital access to online resources and a dearth of face to face communication [R8 L709-716]

Conditions influencing teacher induction and development

In the setting focused upon in the study, teachers were recruited throughout that year, so induction was not structured and the quality of induction varied each time a teacher joined the ESOL setting. Also the system of payment being made only for contracted hours meant that teachers were less inclined to undertake professional collaboration with peers. Their work and commitment was also influenced by policy shifts linked to funding for the ESOL schemes, ESOL credentials and accountability measures. These findings resonate with those of an earlier investigation into the impact of policy in the lifelong learning skills sector (LSS) by Edward *et al* (2007). The researchers found that the sector was characterized by 'high staff turnover; a scattered and in some ways balkanized

workforce; [comparatively unfavourable] conditions of service' and that staff members had to struggle with 'sheer numbers of changes' without being included in 'the formation or evaluation of [these] changes.'

Teachers' views of strategies for adjusting in the workplace

The teachers outlined a number of ways to adjust to the workplace. This included making use of the workroom at the ESOL centre. The participants viewed it as 'a place where you ... offload all the tensions that you've got about whatever it is you've been doing in a supportive environment' [R8 3234-3247] and as a point of support where one could let off steam informally or ask for advice [R2 L902-906].While one of the interviewees felt that being aware of the overall organizational strategy offered insights into where the teachers fitted in the organizational 'jigsaw' [R3 L1868-1870], others believed that collaborating on work in the form of more people teaching together [Annabel R8 933-934], developing a collaborative forum for collegial learning [Amy R1L729-739] and building relationships in the organizations were helpful [Amy R1 L443-449]. It was suggested by Amy that new teachers should be provided with schemes of work for the first few weeks to help them settle in more quickly into their work.

Ramifications of the conflict

In the work setting of the study participant, the analysis of data showed a prevalence of teacher turnover and feelings of alienation on the part of the teachers. The ESOL teacher turnover was reported to be 'substantial' and 'high' and attributable to the poor job stability and permanency of employment in the ESOL sector [R2 L1230-1232]. Another issue was that due to decentralization, the ESOL teachers were now assigned to community settings at a distance from the Centre. As Erica pointed out, this was alienating as:

> *[While we were at] the Centre so Tania, Linda and I and our old Line manager were in the small office downstairs so in that way it was easy for the tutors to come and ask anything anytime because we were always or almost always there was somebody around to answer questions and to support them now that we are out and about I think it's more isolating for them* [Erica R2 L986-995]

Existing induction and support was also perceived to be inadequate in terms of what the teachers needed as Annabel noted:

> *I'm not sure what the formal system is. Cause it's a while since I came in, but I would think the need to be something more something in place, which is more effective to be honest* [Annabel R8 3156-3165]

Evolving into a community of practice

The feelings of alienation, poor communication and the dearth of collaboration in practice pose daunting challenges to teachers' successful integration into the workplace. Given the participants negative feelings towards government's monitoring and control of their work and positive attitudes towards contributions to the organizational management, team meetings and collaboration with peers, a different type of practice seems to be in order. Such a practice requires ESOL teachers to gather together as a community and to set-up a collective praxis that is not mandated or regulated by those participating fully in the configuration. While the elements of a community are in evidence in the setting under study, the management and the teachers need to view things from communities *-of- practice* perspective that enables them to leverage collaboration for their professional development. There is a sense amongst the participant that accountability and performance monitoring do not lead to improvement and that the way the management interacts with the teachers has to transform in order for collaboration and development to transpire. As Amy sum up, if the

organization seeks to improve, the managers need to develop an attitude that says 'we value our teachers as being people who are able to teach us something as being people who are experts in their fields and we want to hear from them' [Amy R1 411-417].

Conclusion

Based on the findings in the study, this paper recommends that decision-makers should improve the induction experience of the ESOL teachers by offering a paid induction week (if possible), a tour of the Center and its satellite community venues, introduction to colleagues, guidance by experienced colleague for a few weeks and the provision of schemes of work to the teachers for the initial weeks.

Further, the teachers should be engaged in local level decision-making related to the processes of education. Feedback loops involving all teachers, employers, union and community stakeholders and researchers may be established to feedback information from local contexts to the policy makers for more effective policy development.

This study represents a small but valuable contribution to the limited literature on Adult ESOL teachers' professional development and learning. It is hoped that the findings of this study will not only help to develop a better picture of Adult ESOL provision and the development of teachers from the perspective of the practitioners but also to provide insights of relevance to the UK as well as the ESL setting in other parts of the world.

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