

South Korean Novice English Language Teachers’ Experience of Induction into Teaching

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Hayes, David, & Chang, Kyungsuk. (2017). South Korean novice English language teachers’ experience of induction into teaching. *English Teaching*, 72(1), 49-71.

The induction experiences of novice teachers are receiving increasing attention within the subject field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The process of beginning to teach is acknowledged to be complex and often fraught with tensions and anxieties for newly qualified teachers who may experience significant disjunction between the realities of classroom and institutional life and what they have been taught on pre-service training courses. Research has also shown that novice teachers can be helped to make a successful transition from the teacher-training environment to the school through well-designed induction programs which provide structured support and professional development with access to resources beyond the school itself. This article seeks to uncover whether these elements of well-designed induction programs are replicated for teachers of English in the Korean school system. Using data gathered in interviews with recently graduated teachers, the article examines the experiences of teaching in the early years and documents teachers’ own perceptions of their induction into teaching. The article discusses the place of the teachers within the social network of the school and, in so doing, hopes to foreground how individuals come to terms with the new and complex roles inherent in ‘being a teacher’ within this framework. This is a perspective particularly necessary for TEFL as a discipline where methods are so often deemed paramount in learning to teach, rather than an understanding of what it means to be a teacher of English as a foreign language in a particular socio-educational context.

Key words: novice teachers, induction, teacher training, English language teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

When teachers embark on their teaching careers as newly-qualified professionals, the

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transition they make from students to regular, full-time teachers is generally considered a ‘reality’ or ‘praxis shock’ (Veenman, 1984). This phenomenon has been recognized worldwide (Ballantyne, 2007; Flores & Day, 2006; Smagorinsky, Gibson, Bickmore, Moore & Cook, 2004; So & Watkins, 2005) as well as across a variety of subject teachers, including those who teach English as a foreign language. This reality shock derives not just from a need to come to terms with a teaching environment that may be different from the idealized versions they encountered during initial teacher training but also with the skills required to function as effective professionals within an organizational culture, such as dealing with colleagues, parents and school administrators and negotiating their identity within the local community served by the school (Gavish & Friedman, 2011; Hayes, 2008; Hayes, Kim & Chang, 2013).

In the general educational literature, the experiences of novice teachers have been the focus of research since the 1980s (see Veenman, 1984) with substantial work after the turn of the century (e.g., Flores, 2006; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009; Hollins, 2012; Shuck, Brady & Griffin, 2005). In contrast, there has been little work in the literature on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL henceforth) until recently (e.g., the 2012 special issue of *TESOL Quarterly*; see articles by Brannan & Bleistein, 2012; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Mann & Tang, 2012; Shin, 2012). This article aims to add to the nascent literature on novice teachers in TEFL by focusing on the experiences of secondary English teachers in the state educational system in South Korea as they negotiate the demands of full-time teaching, and thus to supplement the perspective on induction in South Korea provided by Shin (2012) who focused specifically on reasons why novice teachers with a good command of English ended up conducting their English classes in Korean, despite government policy to ‘Teach English through English’. The article will also make recommendations for initial teacher-training to ease the transition of novice teachers from college to school.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1. Processes of Induction for Novice Teachers

When they begin teaching, novice teachers will experience some form of orientation – typically called induction – to their new working environments, whether this is a formal, structured program or an informal process of socialization by other teachers. The usual objective of any form of induction is to help teachers to adapt to the particular ways of working in their schools and is typically focused on administrative procedures rather than on aspects of teaching in the classroom or working with colleagues in a department. In

becoming a member of the school teaching staff, a novice teacher has to adapt to the school culture and the teacher culture within it. Much of this is dependent on interpersonal relationships, as Hargreaves (1994) noted: “The *form* of teacher culture is to be found in how relations between teachers and their colleagues are articulated” (original emphasis) (p. 166). These relations may vary from school to school and sometimes even within departments in the same school, particularly if there is ‘Balkanization’ of the school staff “characterized by strong and enduring boundaries between different parts of the organization, by personal identification with the domains these boundaries define, and by differences of power between one domain and another” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 235). That is, teachers often identify with their subject group and have little contact with teachers of other subjects, with some subjects seen to be more important in school than others.

2.1.1. Lack of structured induction: Informal and self-socialization

In spite of the fact that induction plays a critical role in teacher retention (Ewing & Smith, 2003) novice teachers are generally expected to act as fully-fledged, experienced professionals from the moment they walk into the school and to do so with minimal or no support (Russell & McPherson, 2001). They are rarely recognized as newly-qualified teachers who are in the early stages of their careers who need assistance as they come to terms with the complex demands of their chosen profession. This belief results in a ‘sink or swim’ process for novice teachers who are often left to self-socialize to the ways in which the school works which, in turn, leads to surviving the introductory year(s) as the primary objective rather than teachers putting into practice what they have learnt on their teacher training courses (Urmston & Pennington, 2008). Self-socialization is not uncommon for novice teachers. Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) found in the Netherlands that the 357 novice teachers in their study felt “that they were left to their own resources” and received little help from more experienced colleagues, with “the initiative to build good relations with colleagues [having to] come from their side.” (p. 202) In essence, teachers are all too often “trained for isolation” (de Lima, 2003, p. 197), inevitably with negative consequences for collegiality throughout their careers.

In South Korea, none of Shin’s (2012) 16 English teachers received any school-level induction other than departmental meetings of grade-level teachers to decide textbook coverage in the school year. The district level induction some received was also only managerial and did not help them with their classroom teaching. In school, the influence of more experienced colleagues was profound with the negative reactions of other teachers leading these novice teachers to question and even abandon attempts to use methods introduced on their training courses (Shin, 2012). Similarly, in Hong Kong, Urmston and Pennington (2008) found that for novice teachers “pressure to conform to the conservative

educational culture work [ed] against any desire and ability to be original or to innovate” (p. 101). The school cultures here militated against collegiality. One of Shin’s (2012) respondents said, “You get really curious about how other teachers teach, but you cannot just walk in and observe them. With the school culture at my school it would not be proper etiquette to ask about other’s teaching styles. Still, if we met and talked, we would gradually become comfortable, and then we could talk openly about our teaching” (p. 556).

Yet collegiality is what novice teachers require as this provides them with opportunities to share with and learn from more experienced others. Shin (2012) noted that “respondents indicated a need for teachers to share ideas from individual experience, discussing methods successful for them and their own plans in the classroom” (p. 556).

2.1.2. Formal induction programs

Self-socialization or finding other sources of support may help novice teachers to come to terms with their new roles in schools, but are less likely to do so than a formal induction program which focuses not just on classroom teaching but the myriad other duties teachers are expected to perform. Research shows that newly-qualified teachers feel “overwhelmed by the amount and variety of duties that they were expected to perform at school” (Flores, 2006, p. 2021) beyond the expected full teaching load, and realized “that they lacked the knowledge to undertake all the tasks and duties required of them” (Flores, 2006, p. 2026). Initial teacher-training courses rarely touch on the non-teaching duties teachers have to undertake, focusing on technical and psychological aspects of teaching itself while failing to acknowledge the importance of administrative procedures and building positive relationships with peers, school administrators and parents.

The demands of a full teaching load – involving extensive preparation, taking responsibility for a range of classes, including the disciplining of students, and correcting homework – compounded by other duties such as record-keeping, report writing, meetings with parents and extra-curricular activities can lead to teacher ‘burnout’ (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Mann & Tang, 2012). Structured induction programs are one way to lessen the chances of burnout and, as a consequence, reduce teacher attrition in the early years. Russell and McPherson (2001), for example, discuss induction programs for novice teachers in the USA which are a form of internship, offering a reduced workload and mentoring from more experienced teachers (one downside is that the internship is often associated with reduced pay). These programs have reduced attrition rates of novice teachers to 10% from a national average of 40% (Russell & McPherson, 2001). However, where novice teachers are regarded as ‘interns’, their perceived status within the school needs to be carefully considered if they are to avoid being regarded as not equal to other teachers and suffer problems from lower status, an experience found in the Scottish

'Teacher Induction Scheme' (Rippon & Martin, 2006). Completion of an induction program can also be tied to professional certification. Angelle (2006) reports on another program in the USA where newly qualified teachers receive 'Level 1 certification' from their teacher training institution but must then complete a one-year 'State Teacher Assistance and Mentoring Program' to achieve 'Level 2 certification' within three years of their graduation.

Whatever the models are, formal induction programs usually aim to help novice teachers to adapt to the norms of the schools within which they work as well as the wider educational system. Ideally, they will do this through appropriately trained mentors working with novice teachers to ensure that they are able to cope with all aspects of being a full-time, professional teacher, promoting collegial ways of working and helping them to access the professional development that they need. If assessment is part of induction it should also be based on agreed standards within the profession, rather than be subjective. Whisnant, Elliott and Pyncheon (2005, p. 12) maintain that formal induction programs of this kind have multiple benefits, reduction in teacher attrition from the profession, reduction in the costs of attrition, increased teacher satisfaction, enhanced professional growth, and development of a tiered professional career model.

Nonetheless, it is not enough for formal induction programs just to be mandatory; they also have to be well planned and managed if they are to have a positive impact. Ewing and Smith (2003) found that the mandatory program in New South Wales, Australia, was "neither systematic or well planned and managed" and "the majority of beginning teachers (70%) are left to find informal support" (p. 30). Like any other educational program, induction programs need to be continually monitored and evaluated to ensure that they are implemented as intended and that they meet their objectives. Making induction for novice teachers mandatory is clearly important but this should not just be formulaic, designed to meet administrative requirements, but should focus on providing a program to meet expressed needs, one in which the novice teachers feel valued and respected as individuals with the capacity to contribute fully to their schools given the right framework of support.

Moreover, just like their students, novice teachers do not come to schools as 'tabula rasa.' Gavish and Friedman (2011) found that novice teachers have particular expectations of their roles in relation to other groups both within and outside the school – "students, parents, colleagues, the school principal and the public" (p. 5). They highlight the organizational working environment and the expectations of novice teachers in this respect, "the fact that they are also organizational persons, working for a professional organization with a professional approach and working routine that characterize other such organizations. As an organizational person, the novice teacher sees the school as a place where one can develop one's professional identity in a collegial, supportive environment" (Gavish & Friedman, 2011, p. 13).

An institutional perspective, with novice teachers seen as members of organizations with their own norms of behavior, is, as we have intimated, very rarely encountered in the literature on novice TEFL teachers, which remains overwhelmingly focused on teachers' classroom experience (for an exception, see Hayes, 2008).

2.2. Teacher Training and Teacher Induction Policy in South Korea

2.2.1. Initial teacher training for secondary school teachers

Initial teacher training for secondary school teachers is provided through three routes. The most common is a 4-year-training BA course at colleges of education in 43 universities throughout the country which allows teachers to take the national 2nd class teacher selection test. Student teachers take courses specific to the subject they want to teach and must pass a mandatory 4-week teaching practice in a secondary school. Another route is to complete a higher degree teacher training course (MA or PhD) at a graduate school of education. Applicants for the higher degree courses are required to have teaching experience, typically gained in private schools. The other one is to major in education with the required teaching practice. The three routes provide the necessary qualification to take the teacher selection test.

The selection test for 2nd class teachers is administered by the 17 local offices of education (LOEs) across the country. Every year the LOEs announce the number of teaching posts they wish to fill. Candidates for these posts can choose a local office of education where they want to teach when appointed. The first phase of the selection procedure is a paper-and-pencil test designed by the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) to measure the candidate's knowledge and understanding of subject teaching. Candidates that pass the first phase proceed to the second phase with three separate test areas, an in-depth interview for teaching aptitude, lesson planning and microteaching. Each LOE has standard questions for the interview and standard criteria for microteaching.

While the number of teaching posts the 17 LOEs need to fill every year is limited, the current situation in the job market has had a significant influence on competition in the teacher selection test with the stability of the teaching profession attracting an increasing number of applicants to the test.

2.2.2. Appointment procedures and the official system of induction for new secondary teachers

Candidates that pass the second phase of the teacher selection test are appointed to a

public school in the LOE they chose when applying for the test and are bound by the Official Appointment Regulations when receiving their appointments as 2nd class secondary teachers. Most LOEs provide a short pre-career training program for newly appointed teachers before starting work. The content and length of the induction program varies between the 17 LOEs, lasting from 2 to 10 days and is delivered at teacher training centers affiliated to each LOE. The courses aim to orient newly appointed teachers to their teaching careers, though it is generally observed that most time on the course is allotted to appointment regulations and administration rather than to the teaching of subjects. When the newly appointed teachers are informed of their schools they start to teach. The day teachers go to their schools is the day their teaching career officially begins.

Every LOE has its own systemized follow-up training course for the induction of newly appointed secondary teachers. The length of this follow-up course is usually 60 hours, which is the minimum number of hours required for credit. It is strongly recommended – but not obligatory – that newly appointed teachers should take the follow-up course. Any novice teachers who miss the opportunity to take the course in their first year can take it with newly appointed teachers in subsequent years. On this follow-up induction course more time is allocated for subject teaching than general guidelines for career and administration. Teachers are told that the credit from the course is taken into account in teacher evaluations by their head teachers at the end of the year, but the evaluation results do not affect their contract with the government.

More recently many LOEs have developed systems of continuing support for novice teachers through school-based voluntary programs such as mentoring, consulting and subject training during the semester. While some LOEs are very open about how this kind of novice teacher support program is run, little is known about the effectiveness of their operation in individual schools. One problem with these school-based support programs is sustainability because their operational budget is not secure in most LOEs. Other avenues for professional development for novice teachers may be found in the various training courses offered to every teacher in a LOE.

Secondary school novice teachers with the 2nd class certificate are entitled to attend a training course for the 1st class certificate, which affects teachers' salaries, after three years' of teaching. Every LOE runs such a training course lasting for about one month during either the summer or winter vacations. Recently many LOEs have reduced the length of this course from 120 to less than 100 hours to minimize its cost.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Participants

For the purposes of this study, and in conformity with official labeling in South Korea, a novice teacher is one who has less than 3 years' experience of teaching. Nine secondary English teachers who had responded to an earlier survey on novice teachers indicated they were prepared to take part in follow-up interviews. Of these 9, only 5 could get permission from their head teachers to travel to Seoul for an interview. All of the 5 teachers who were interviewed were female; two taught in middle schools and 3 in high schools. Interview participants were thus self-selected, which may mean they were not representative of the target group of novice teachers as a whole. However, their comments are taken to be indicative of issues faced by novice teachers and no claim is made for generalizability from these interviews to all female novice teachers of English in the country. This article focuses on the experiences of the middle and high school teachers who teach English as a subject in a departmental structure. For the purposes of this article, five respondents' names have been anonymized as follows:

TABLE 1
Participating Teachers

ID	Sex	Age	School	Location	Teaching Experience
Lee	F	31	middle school	Gyeonggi-do	2.3 years
Jeong	F	28	middle school	Changwon	1.9 years
Choi	F	34	high school	Seoul	1.3 years
Moon	F	30	high school	Gyeonggi-do	2.3 years
Park	F	27	high school	Daejeon	2.9 years

3.2. Procedures

A questionnaire was developed to investigate experiences of novice teachers but is not part of this article. The teachers who chose to respond returned their questionnaires to their LOEs who then forwarded them to one of the study's authors in Seoul. Those teachers who indicated they were willing to participate in follow-up interviews were contacted and invited to Seoul by the study's Korea-based author. Potential interviewees needed to obtain the consent of their head teachers before travelling to Seoul for interview, and, as indicated, only five secondary teachers were able to get this. Those who did come were interviewed by the researcher in her office in Korean, their shared first language. Recordings of the interviews were made, and the whole recordings were translated into English prior to analysis.

The interviews followed a standard list of questions (see Appendix). The questions were designed to explore interviewees' perceptions of their initial 1-3 years of teaching and to provide more detail of their experiences in terms of, *inter alia*, the relationship between what they had learnt during their pre-service training and how this was implemented in school; their initial induction in visits to their appointed school before they began teaching; their first few days of teaching; how well they felt they were fitting into their department and school; their formal induction experiences; and their suggestions for improving the induction experiences of novice teachers in the future. With this range of questions, the intention was to consider teaching from a more holistic perspective, in particular the place of teachers within the wider school organization and society as a whole.

Data was analyzed inductively through a process of reading and re-reading of the transcripts. As there were a comparatively small number of interviewees, no software was used in the analysis, and it was found that the process undertaken engendered close familiarity with the data. The main dimensions of categories were determined by the framework of questions used, which were designed to give coherence to the interviews and enable comparison across interviewees.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

We report on findings under the five themes generated from the interview framework and the data: quality of pre-service training, formal induction processes, relationships with colleagues, relationships with the school principal, relationships with parents, and reflections on the first year(s). Not all of the respondents' experiences are reported in every section, where there are strong similarities between them, largely for reasons of space in an article of this type.

4.1. Disjunction Between Pre-service Training and Classroom Practice

Perceptions of the quality of pre-service training varied, but there seemed to be a general concern with the theoretical nature of what was taught in university or college, criticized as having "*too stereotyped textbook-like content.*" This perception was echoed by many others, as we see here: "*Most of my major-related courses were too theoretical and there were too few practical training ones available.*" It seems that there is almost an expectation that pre-service training will be overly theoretical and will provide inadequate opportunities for practice. Ms. Lee, a middle school teacher, noted:

As expected the major-related subjects were far more theoretical than practical.

Virtually, I didn't have any chance to plan a demo class by myself and simulate it before taking part in the 4-week practice training session in my senior year.

Given the theoretical nature of courses, it is perhaps not surprising that teaching methods came in for some criticism as well: *"some professors' teaching methods didn't work for me and were not helpful to the students at all."*

There was also significant concern with the disjunction between the classroom as expected from training and the classroom as reality once in school: *"the actual class settings were so different from what I had learned at college."* Most teachers wished that they could have spent more time in practice teaching in schools as the experience taught them that there was so much more to being a teacher than proficiency in the language and expertise in classroom methodology. Ms. Park, now teaching in high school, summed up her pre-service training experience as follows:

I understand it is critical for us to be equipped with a theoretical base; however, I wish I could have had more training opportunities in the field. As a matter of fact, I could get a lot of practical tips from those teachers currently working at school during my field training session. In addition, it was quite embarrassing to find there were so many more things to learn as a teacher, and I was at a loss as to what to do during the [field] session.

To counteract these deficiencies, she felt that the training period should have been a minimum of 6 months, as the current duration of one-month *"was just a touch. It was not even close to what I had expected. Though I found teaching pleasurable, it just finished before I could even make any judgements."* Ms. Lee felt much the same and advocated for a form of internship, commenting:

I think that the 4 week training session is too short and skin-deep to fully understand what it is like to become a teacher and experience school life as a teacher. I suggest it should be extended to at least a 6-month period during which the trainees are hired as an interim teacher so that they could sense an in-depth school life.

Despite the preponderance of these criticisms in the data, it should not be forgotten that how individuals respond to their training circumstances is also important. Though she regretted that she had not been given enough opportunity to teach because *"Instead we were given some other assignments including preparing materials for the other teachers,"* another high school teacher, Ms. Choi, explained how she made the most of her few

teaching hours in the practicum:

I recorded my teaching sessions and got feedback on my own teaching. Because I emphasized realistic teaching practices, it helped me to develop skills as a teacher in addition to studying theories on language learning.

Whether all teachers-in-training have the necessary resources and support to emulate this kind of response is open to question. However, based on the responses of these novice teachers, it seems that, before their students embark on the practicum, pre-service training courses would benefit both from making students aware of possible ways in which they could make best use of practice teaching and encouraging innovative responses to circumstances.

4.2. Formal Induction Experiences

All teachers experienced some form of induction for their first appointments in school. As we have seen, induction courses are offered by the teacher's LOE and some schools also arrange programs for novice teachers. It is to be expected that the quality and usefulness of these programs varies from area to area and school to school. Ms. Lee's programs consisted of a one-week course arranged at a local university "*which wasn't of any practical help either when I started teaching*" and a visit to the school in which she simply met the school principal and other senior teachers and took a tour of the school. She had no other induction activities within the school, received no mentoring and no follow-up from the LOE to the one-week course she attended. Little wonder that she said "*it is absolutely necessary for the novice teachers to have a mentor-mentee relationship with those senior teachers who teach the same subject.*"

Ms Moon, another high school teacher, also favored a mentoring system as "*it was too difficult for me to follow just what they did at school.*" Just like Ms. Lee in middle school, she received only perfunctory induction, meeting school administrators, and then was immediately assigned work. Her situation was slightly different from other novice teachers as she came late to teaching, at the age of 34, and the more experienced teachers at her school "*didn't even treat me in the same way as they did the other novice teachers*" because of her age. In this situation it was other novice teachers who helped her to adapt to the routines of the school while if she needed help with her teaching she turned to her husband, who was himself a more experienced teacher.

Ms. Choi only met the administrative staff of the school in which she had been placed but had no other induction. Similarly, Ms. Jeong's in-school induction consisted of "*some information on the school administration work, but none on practical teaching methods*

and guiding the students”; however, she also attended three courses outside the school, a ‘job training course’ for new appointees, an On-site Technical Training Program (OTTP) in the local ‘English Village’ and a novice teachers’ training session during her first summer vacation. Of these she felt the first two were helpful, primarily for the opportunity to “*interact with other novice teachers and share some ideas and methods with one another,*” while the third course was not. Ms. Park also attended a course at her local university and OTTP in an ‘English Village’ where she valued the opportunity to practise her teaching and receive feedback from students. She particularly appreciated a case-study component to her course in which novice teachers were able to discuss actual events that happened in classes and develop responses to them. Though she seems to have had perhaps the most helpful induction from beyond the school, Ms. Park, like others, received no in-school induction, nor was there any follow-up to the external training. Of her experience in school she commented that “*I hardly got any help [...]. Everything was very shaky from the beginning. I had trouble adapting myself to the school situation.*”

4.3. Relationships with Colleagues

The ‘intensification of teacher’s work’ that has been brought to schools across the world by changes to managerial systems (Burchielli, 2006) is also present in South Korea. Teachers’ administrative work casts a shadow over their teaching responsibilities, to the extent that time for collegial practice centered on teaching itself is lost. For example, Ms. Lee noted that, in a system where teachers tend to be judged on their students’ results, they felt they were in competition and collegiality was even more hindered. As she explained:

We share ideas, but not teaching methods and lesson plans freely. We are kind of competing with one another, and that’s why we are reluctant to share them.

Ms. Lee stated quite clearly that she would like ‘more meaningful interaction’ with her colleagues. Similarly, Ms. Moon’s interaction with her colleagues about teaching did not include sharing of activities or lesson plans but focused on the students: “*we talk about the attitude of the students.*” Of course, this can be useful but in her case she indicated this was not at all helpful as “*we usually end up speaking ill of them.*” For support she turned not to more experienced teachers but other novice teachers in her school.

The notion of teaching being a very individualistic profession was represented in Ms. Park’s belief that “*each teacher should have his or her own way of teaching.*” Nevertheless, in her school, teachers were more collegial in general. Like Ms. Lee’s colleagues they talked about students but in a constructive way:

We talk about how to make them focus on their classes using a carrot and stick approach, how to figure out what their needs are, and how to provide motivation for their learning.

They also shared materials (but not lesson plans) but perhaps more importantly her head of department was considerate of the demands on novice teachers and *“tries not to burden them with too much work.”* Further, as so often happens, individual teachers find a particular colleague with whom they feel comfortable sharing and turn to them for advice when needed. For Ms. Park *“Most of the time I asked one close colleague for help because I thought he would not blame me for any mistakes.”* While she may have been fortunate to have such a close colleague, her remarks also indicate that a culture of blame was prevalent in the school and novice teachers were not afforded much leeway, so it is not surprising that she also concluded *“overall, I was very nervous in everything I did.”*

Ms. Choi did not feel she was treated as an equal by her colleagues who often asked her to do menial *“school chores such as wrapping test sheets,”* leading her to feel *“there is a kind of hierarchy between the novice teachers and the experienced ones.”* This hierarchy, extending downwards the hierarchy between administrators and classroom teachers, seems to have promoted a sense of group identity amongst the novice teachers who joined the school at the same time, and they socialized in a monthly get-together outside school. In contrast, Ms. Jeong did feel treated as an equal in her school and valued the assistance given by her head of department to help her settle in and come to terms with the National Education Information System (NEIS). As she was seated next to him in the staffroom she was also able to consult with him about day to day teaching, *“what activities are good and what are not, managing the class and so on.”* However, she regretted that interaction with other colleagues was much more limited *“because we don’t get together that often except when making text questions.”*

In general, then, collegiality was limited in these teachers’ schools with novice teachers left to fend for themselves or to seek support from fellow new teachers. All of these teachers – even Ms. Choi who was helped by her head of department – would have welcomed opportunities for more genuine sharing of teaching ideas, materials and lesson plans, moving conversations beyond talking (often complaining) about the attitudes of students. However, it seems that teachers’ workload provided no time or space for collegiality and certainly not for the kind of mentoring we noted previously that these novice teachers would have valued.

4.4. Relationships with the School Principal

There is a perception of South Korean middle and high schools as being hierarchical and

authoritarian (Kim, Lee & Joo, 2014), which is generally reflected in the data from these respondents. Ms. Park had very little to say about her principal. She did not feel that he was approachable nor did she feel that she could discuss problems with him. He was a distant figure, preoccupied with his own work to the extent that *“I wasn’t able to get on good terms with him.”* Principals’ authority is not just restricted to matters of school administration but can also extend into the personal sphere too. For example, Ms. Lee’s school principal was not only unapproachable but *“so strict and conservative he often commented on my attire.”* In an authoritarian structure, principals (and vice-principals) do not act in a consultative way, tending, as Ms. Moon said, *“to have the teachers under their control”* though, in spite of their power, *“they hardly give any practical help in terms of advising and cooperating.”* Ms. Moon also said that her principal was not approachable and *“doesn’t talk to ordinary teachers but to the heads of department.”* She noted that whenever she had a problem, *“for the sake of the school atmosphere, I usually talk to the vice-principal instead.”* This feeling that teachers cannot come to the principal with their concerns was echoed by Ms. Jeong who did not feel her principal had helped her to be a successful teacher, particularly by overburdening her with administrative work:

Well, I was given too much administration work during my first year, which made me really tired. Of course, I understand I had no choice then, but I still wish I hadn’t been so fed up with that much work.

As we have seen, it is often the tasks beyond the classroom which novice teachers feel most unprepared for after their pre-service training and with which they are most in need of assistance and guidance. Overburdening novice teachers with administrative work only exacerbates the difficulties they have in adjusting to life in schools.

Of course there will always be exceptions to general perceptions and, in contrast to the others’ views about practical help with teaching, Ms. Choi respected her principal as a model professional who was concerned with the development of the school and its teachers. As an example, she cited how he asked teachers to work on presentations about their classes and discuss them with one another which she felt helped teachers to *“reflect on ourselves and our classes.”* Another example was the development of a ‘self-training’ plan during the summer vacation for working with both low and high-achieving students, which was for her *“a very rewarding time to think about several topics I should be reminded of.”* Nevertheless, in terms of personal relationships, the principal remained aloof with Ms. Choi also saying *“there is no real relationship between us”* and *“he is somewhat authoritative.”*

4.5. Relationships with Parents

Parents in South Korea typically take a great interest in their children's performance in school, most likely influenced by the intensely competitive nature of the high-stakes university entrance examination at the end of high school to which they devote considerable sums of money and for which children seem to spend their entire education preparing (Seth, 2002). The 'English fever' documented in South Korea has its roots in this wider 'education fever' (Park, 2009) and both translate into another source of pressure on teachers.

Teachers are disappointed that parents feel the need to send their children to private classes after school and that they seem to place more faith in these private institutes than they do in the regular school: "*I wish they would trust the school more than private institutes*" as Ms. Jeong said. Though most parents respect teachers' expertise, some do not always treat teachers well. Ms. Lee's experience was the most disturbing amongst these teachers. She commented:

There are some who distrust me, or even use violence towards me [...]. Moreover, I often see the same things happen to some of my colleagues. I even get phone calls from parents asking me to correct answers on the test without them checking to see if they are really wrong or not. [...] I wish they would trust the teachers and side with them even though some of them do not meet their expectations. I believe most of the teachers at school do their best to teach and guide the students with their own philosophy and love.

Her heartfelt plea to be trusted more by parents was echoed by Ms. Moon who recognized the need for more dialogue as means to respectful behavior: "*we should base out relationship on mutual trust and it's necessary for us to have as many opportunities as possible to talk both in person and on the phone.*" However, these opportunities may be reducing, in part because parents can access information about education and their children's school work through the internet – and South Korea is one of the most 'wired' countries in the world (Isifidis & Wheeler, 2016). The impact of technological changes on society is thus reflected in teacher-parent relationships, as Ms. Park noted:

They seem to show less respect to teachers than they used to in the past because now they have many other resources available for help.

Obtaining information from other resources will mean that parents come to school with views influenced by what they access on-line as much (if not more than) those they

develop through interaction with teachers. In an educational culture where parents are often heavily involved in schools – “*in open classes, demonstration classes, the teacher evaluation system, parents’ prayer meetings and inspecting the tests,*” as Ms. Choi reported – there is considerable scope for teachers to feel that their professional expertise is not respected and marginalized in the face of ‘parent power’. Desforges with Abouchaar (2003) concluded in their review of available literature that active involvement by parents in their children’s education is generally correlated with enhanced performance. However, this involvement was in support of the teacher and the school and centered on the home. Desforges with Abouchaar (2003) noted that “of the many forms of parental involvement, it is the ‘at-home’ relationships and modelling of aspirations which play the major part in impact on school outcomes. Involvement works indirectly on school outcomes by helping the child build a pro-social, pro-learning self concept and high educational aspirations” (p. 86).

Thus, it is through positive modelling at home that parental involvement has the greatest impact on student achievement rather than direct school-based parent involvement. Lack of impact of direct parental involvement was also found in more recent research on data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which concluded that “teacher-initiated involvement and parent volunteering were not positively associated with achievement’ and ‘The one consistent finding across all parent reported measures was that no measure was positively related to student achievement” (Sebastian, Moon & Cunningham, 2016, p. 17). South Korean parents may, then, not be helping their children if they are so directly involved in schools.

4.6. Reflections on the First Year(s)

The first years of teaching are full of challenges for novice teachers, who often find themselves ill-prepared by their initial teacher-training courses to deal with the complex realities of classroom life and membership of a cadre of professional teachers within a complex organizational structure.

Coming to terms with the realities of classroom teaching by itself takes time and requires adaptability. All of the teachers in this study were aware that there were areas of their teaching which required development. Ms. Moon prioritized a need to “*build a good rapport with my students*” while Ms. Lee wished she had been able to teach “*in a more varied and exciting fashion*” instead of being so focused on control in the classroom. Issues of discipline have been reported as a common concern of novice teachers for a variety of subjects and for many years (see e.g., Onafowara, 2005; Veenman, 1984) and were represented across our data. Ms. Jeong thought she “*should have done better in guiding my students, especially those troublesome students.*” In her second year she felt

she was improving as a teacher over her first year but still did not consider herself truly successful:

It was really hard for me during the first year. I tried really hard but it didn't work out well. The students didn't respond that well. I was short of expertise and experience, feeling sorry for the students. Now I am in my second year and feel much better. I think I have been successful in general though I don't know what real success would be like.

Even the most self-assured of teachers know they have areas in which they could improve in their first year. Ms. Choi, as we have seen, was able to develop ways to overcome the perceived deficiencies of her initial teacher-training and carried this attitude forward into her first year of teaching. Reflecting on her first year she said “*there is still much to learn*” and she was aware of areas in which she could improve her classes:

I have a little trouble with my teaching methods and, in particular, dividing my 50 minute class into several well-planned time slots.

For some novice teachers, the need to balance teaching with administrative duties may impact their capacity to develop their teaching as they would like. Ms. Park noted the danger of her teaching becoming routinized, even at this early stage in her career. She had a realistic view of her achievements in her second year in teaching and was well aware of where she was falling short of her own expectations. She concluded:

I still have a lot of things to learn by myself at school. I sometimes feel it energy-consuming to motivate my students, interact with them and help them to achieve their full potential. By the way, I am only in my second year, and I wonder if I may fall into routines mainly because I am preoccupied with my administrative workload. I made some big mistakes over the past year in one sense and I learned a lot from them in another. Last year was not really successful for me, but I am still here working as a teacher!

Ms. Park's comments serve to highlight many of the areas of concern for novice teachers. We saw previously that Ms. Jeong also felt herself overburdened with administrative work and if novice teachers are spending so much time on administration it is inevitable that they will have less energy for the physically and emotionally draining task of full-time teaching with which they are also striving to come to terms. It is unfortunate that educational systems appear to prioritize the completion of administrative tasks over

actual classroom teaching.

5. CONCLUSION

Data from the novice teachers interviewed for this study indicates that much remains to be done to help them to make the transition from university/college to school a successful one. Schools are very hierarchical, with principals and vice-principals in positions of authority over teachers, providing little to no practical assistance to novice teachers; indeed in many instances hardly ever talking to them. Only one of the novice teachers experienced a principal who was approachable and constructive, setting an example as a model professional and promoting teacher self-development. Often teachers ‘self-socialize’ into school routines and struggle in the early years to cope with both their teaching and the heavy administrative workload they are usually given. With the emphasis accorded to English in South Korea – the so-called ‘English fever’ – and continual failure of reforms in English teaching designed to raise national standards in the language, such as the ‘Teaching English Through English’ policy (Shin, 2012), teachers of English often come in for heavy criticism of their performance.

Data from these novice teachers suggest that before improvements in classroom teaching can be expected, attention needs to be paid to the educational structures in which teachers work. At present all teachers are affected by the ‘intensification of teaching’ which leaves them with little time to consult with each other, and sees actual classroom teaching overshadowed by administrative tasks. This situation is particularly acute for novice teachers who have to manage the transition from being students on their initial teacher-training courses to full professionals in schools in a very limited time-span and with minimal support either in the form of structured induction courses, a collegial working environment or, what is most desired by these novice teachers, an effective mentoring program. Making a success of English teaching in South Korea is not simply a case of knowing how to develop and deliver well-planned, creative lessons to students: it also encompasses socialization into departmental and school structures; managing relationships with colleagues, the school principal and parents too; as well as accomplishing myriad administrative tasks in prescribed ways. It seems high time that integrating into the organizational and social structure of schools was recognized as an essential component of becoming a professional teacher. As a consequence, it should receive much more attention on initial teacher-training courses as well as featuring in a structured induction process for novice teachers centered on effective mentoring by more experienced teachers.

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APPENDIX

Interview Topic Areas for Secondary School Novice Teachers

I. Introduction

1. Why did you decide to become an English teacher (rather than a teacher of another subject)?
2. Do you think your pre-service training helped you to be a good English teacher?
 - 2.1 If so, how?
 - 2.2 If not, what changes to the pre-service program do you think would have helped?

II. Teaching English in your school

3. How long have you been at this school?
4. What classes do you teach?
5. Please tell me about your daily routine.
6. What do you most enjoy about teaching English?
7. What do you least enjoy about teaching English?
8. Have you had any problems teaching English during your first year(s) of teaching?
 - 8.1 If so, what were these? How did you overcome them?
 - 8.2 If not, why do you think you have been able to manage so well?
9. How do your students react to English? (*Please give examples that show student's views and reasons for them.*)

- 9.1 Do they like or dislike it?
- 9.2 Do they think it is important or not important to their futures?
- 10. What's it like being a teacher of English in your department?
- 11. When you arrived at your school, did anyone help you to settle in as an English teacher?
 - 11.1 If so, who? How did they help?
 - 11.2 If not, how do you think you could have been helped to settle in?
- 12. Has your department head helped you with your English teaching in your first year(s) as a teacher?
 - 12.1 If so, how did he or she do this?
 - 12.2 If not, how could he or she have helped you more?
- 13. Have your department colleagues helped you with your English teaching in your first year(s) as a teacher?
 - 13.1 If so, how did they do this?
 - 13.2 If not, how could they have helped you more?
- 14. Has the school principal or anyone else in the administration helped you with your English teaching in your first year(s) as a teacher?
 - 14.1 If so, how did they do this?
 - 14.2 If not, how could they have helped you more?
- 15. On any induction course(s) you have taken has there been anything specifically to help you with your teaching of English as a subject?
 - 15.1 If so, what was this? (Please say more about the course, who provided it and so on).
 - 15.2 If not, what would you like to have had on an induction course about your subject, English?

III. English and teaching in Korea

- 16. Do you think knowledge of English is important in Korean society?
 - 16.1 If so, why and how is this shown?
 - 16.2 If not, why do you think this?
- 17. What attitudes do Koreans have to English?
 - 17.1 How do they show their attitudes?
 - 17.2 What are the reasons for these attitudes?
- 18. Do you think Korean society values teachers as much as other professionals? *(Please give specific examples, and reasons for your answers.)*
 - 18.1 If so, how is this shown?
 - 18.2 If not, why do you think teachers are not valued?
 - 18.3 Are English teachers valued more or less than other teachers?

Applicable levels: Secondary

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Received on December 1, 2016

Reviewed on January 15, 2017

Revised version received on February 15, 2017