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The non-joiners: Why migrant Muslim women aren't accessing English language classes

Abstract

Much literature and research has been devoted to the disadvantages faced by migrant women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who continue to experience a lower standard of English proficiency (Alcorso 1991; Ruddock 1992; Raynor 1992; McRobbie and Jupp 1992). For non-English speaking background (NESB) migrant Muslim women, the factors of ethnicity and gender may be further compounded by a third dimension associated with religious and cultural barriers to participation.

Muslim women as a group

Perhaps the most salient feature of the Muslim population in Australia is the extraordinary diversity of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds from which Australian Muslims hail, with over 80 different countries of origin being represented by the female Muslim population alone. It is both the linguistic diversity and the religious homogeneity that set Muslim women apart from other NESB migrant women. Despite this, migrant Muslim women have rarely been seen as a separate social group. The study reported in this paper was based on the recognition that migrant Muslim women, by virtue of their religious and cultural belief system, do in fact form a group whose needs and status differ from those of other migrant women. This type of research is necessary if we are to understand the factors that influence the decision by some Muslim women not to access their English language entitlements, which in turn limits their ability to participate in the wider Australian community.

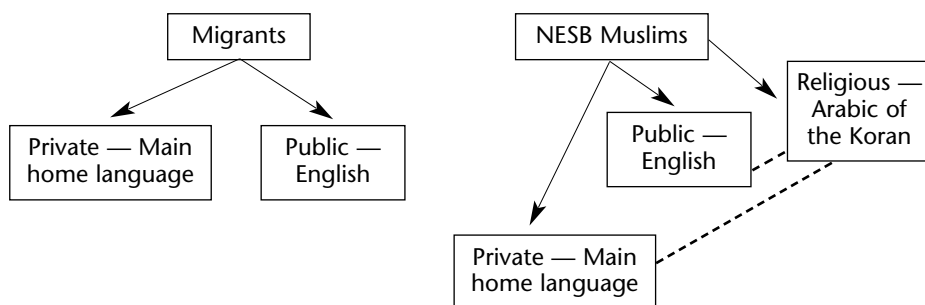
The purpose and background of the study

This paper is based on a study which was designed to explore both the internal and external factors which influence the decisions of migrant Muslim women to access or not access their 510-hour English language entitlement. The study aimed to create a picture of the type of Muslim women who were and were not accessing classes or who had not accessed classes prior to the study.

The focus of this paper is the results of one part of the study: the internal and external factors which influenced a group of 23 Muslim women to access or not to access their language entitlements.

Muslims and language use

There is significant accord among Australian policy makers, providers and linguists that proficiency in English can empower the non-native speaker by affording him or her the power to interact in social situations, to enter gainful employment, to participate in Australian society and to achieve interpersonal solidarity (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1995; Dexter 1987; Hartley 1989; DEET 1991). The debate over the language rights of immigrants has given rise to opposition between the uniformist view that immigrants 'give up their rights to their languages and their cultures by migrating' (Wardaugh, 1993: 349) and the pluralist view that migrants should not be required to give up their mother tongue. With the current emphasis on a multicultural Australia where the individual may separate the linguistic demands of public life from those of the private domain, this issue is compounded by the complex interrelationship of language and domain for the Muslim community. For many migrants, bilingualism may only be a matter of reserving the mother tongue for the domestic and/or social domains, whilst English skills are acquired for use in the public domain. For Muslims the issue of bilingualism is much more complex. Language is not only tied to culture and tradition, but also has strong links with religion and religious practices, which affect not only the domestic, but also the public domain. For Muslims who do not have Arabic as a mother tongue, the language of the religious domain is different from that of the private domain where the mother tongue may be retained. This is further complicated by the impact Islam, with its strict doctrines on the roles of men and women in domestic and social life, has on the public and private domains. This may be represented as follows:



For migrant Muslim women this issue may be further compounded by the role their religion assigns to women in society. For these women, there may be a conflict between their commitment to Islam, the cultural norms of

their countries of origin and the need or desire to take part fully in Australian public life. In April 1995, in the *Western Australian state settlement plan*, published by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. It was asserted that migrant and refugee women experience more barriers to access than migrant and refugee men. The report stated that 'Should they [migrant/refugee women] be from a traditionally male dominated culture, it is unlikely that they will ever participate fully in Australian society' (1995: 19).

Methodology

This paper is based on data collected by interviewing 23 Muslim women from Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, former Yugoslavia and Ethiopia. The respondents were selected because Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate high immigration rates from predominantly Muslim countries where English was not the main language. All respondents were eligible for English language classes at the time of the study. Ten of the women had had access to, or were accessing, English language programs at the time of the study. Thirteen had never accessed classes.

The interviews were conducted either on a one to one basis with the principal researcher, herself a bilingual Muslim, or in focus groups of up to five women in either mother tongue or English. The interview schedule used in the sample survey consisted of four sections:

1. General information relating to age, family, socioeconomic status, education, and period of residence in Australia;
2. A domain analysis designed to determine patterns of English language use among the respondents;
3. A number of statements regarding respondents' attitudes towards English, language learning, and Australian society in order to examine the relationship between attitudes towards the mainstream Australian society and learning English;
4. Eight open-ended questions in which the respondents were encouraged to talk freely about their ideas, experiences and perceptions.

The interview questions were specifically framed to address the research questions and to allow for detailed responses from the respondents. The interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length, and were audio taped. Once transcribed, a system of colour-coded key words was used to identify and reference areas of interest. These were transferred to a chart which enabled cross referencing of key informant and respondent interview data. The areas of interest were then analysed in order to find a) answers to the research question, b) patterns of similarity and difference in the women's answers, c) patterns of similarity and difference between the two subgroups of respondents, and d) other patterns or issues that emerged.

In addition, a series of three key informant interviews were undertaken with a representative from a Muslim Women's community group, a male

spokesperson for the Muslim community, and Hanifa Deen, author of *Caravanserai: Journey among Australian Muslims* (1995).

The key informant interviews covered areas such as the problems faced by Muslim women in Perth, the cultural and religious barriers to participation, and the attitudes of the general Muslim population to Australian society. These were issues which had emerged from the data analysis of the interviews described above.

Are Muslim women accessing their English language entitlements?

The analysis of the data suggested that, relative to the number of migrant Muslim women from NESB backgrounds who were eligible to access classes, many Muslim women did not appear to be accessing classes. The results thus support observations made by service providers. Both internal and external factors were claimed to have contributed to the relatively low presence of Muslim women in English language programs. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, and the data collected from the interview schedules, were collated to form a list of the characteristics most prevalent in those respondents who had accessed classes as opposed to those who had not. In effect, these two lists indicate some of the factors typical of Muslim women who are more likely and less likely to access classes respectively. They should not however be seen as mutually exclusive. It is possible, for example, that some women may have an expressed desire or need to learn English but do not have access to accurate information, or face barriers relating to their spouses', or even their own, religious and cultural belief system. These factors are listed below:

Muslim women more likely to access classes:

- ❖ Need English to access further study or the labour force
- ❖ Have an expressed desire to interact in English on a social level
- ❖ Have a recognised need to learn English through an acknowledgement that English is the lingua franca in Australia
- ❖ Perceive English as a prestige language
- ❖ Have a desire or need to be self-dependent

Muslim women less likely to access classes:

- ❖ Do not have access to information regarding available services
- ❖ Have limited schooling and low literacy skills in L1
- ❖ Have young children or a high level of family responsibility
- ❖ Have spouses who are unsympathetic to their need to learn English
- ❖ Face cultural and/or religious barriers

- ❖ Perceive English proficiency as a means to improving their standard of living and quality of life
- ❖ Feel uncomfortable attending mixed-sex classes
- ❖ Have access to information about available language services
- ❖ Are unwilling to participate in external domains
- ❖ Are recent arrivals who do not have extensive support networks
- ❖ Lack transport
- ❖ Have school aged children living at home and attending school
- ❖ Do not have a perceived need to learn English

The factors which influence the decision by migrant Muslim women to access or not access classes

Table 1 gives the responses to a number of statements set out in the interview schedule. The ten statements relate to language attitudes and attitudes to Australian society. Responses from this section of the study were used in conjunction with responses to a number of open-ended questions to formulate a set of factors, external and internal, which influenced the decision by the Muslim women to undertake English language classes.

Table 1: Responses to statements concerning language attitudes

Statement	Agree	Disagree	NA
1. I always need an interpreter or translator when I am dealing with official business.	12	11	
2. My husband/children need to know English more than me because he works and they go to school.	14	5	4
3. I rely on my husband/children to write letters and fill in forms for me.	16	5	2
4. I would like to learn English but I don't have the time.	8	5	10
5. I need to learn English now more than when I first arrived in Australia.	14	8	1
6. I would like to learn English to be able to talk to Australian people.	18	5	
7. I want to learn English so that I can find a job.	14	8	1
8. As a Muslim woman, I feel I can live like non-Muslim Australians.	8	15	
9. I think learning English is very important because I live in Australia.	21	2	

Table 1 continued

10. I would like to learn English but I do not feel comfortable attending classes with other non-Muslims and men.	8	15
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External factors***Accessibility to classes***

The location and timing of classes proved to be a significant factor in the decision about whether to access classes for these women. A full-time study load was considered too high by most of the women. Overall, it was indicated that these women would prefer to have more than one hour a week of tuition but no more than ten hours a week of tuition.

For some of the women in the study, transport to and from classes also proved to be a barrier to access. However, the overall indication was that most women would travel longer distances to classes if they were held on a part-time basis and if they were held in a place where they would feel comfortable, such as in a Mosque or at a Muslim community centre or school. Although only eight of the 23 women interviewed agreed that they did not feel comfortable attending classes with non-Muslims and men, most of the women indicated that single-sex classes, or classes specifically targeting Muslim women, would greatly increase the participation rates of Muslim women. In an interview with a group of five women from Sudan and Eritrea, for example, the respondents all agreed that single sex classes were necessary for some Muslim women:

There is no difficulty for us, for example, but there are a number of Muslim women who don't want to see men and talk to them, the ones who wear *nikab* [full veil including face, hands and feet]. For them it might be difficult.

In another interview with a twenty-four year old Afghan woman, the respondent indicated that she had experienced problems attending mixed-sex classes because: '... woman must stay home. Not meet other mans. Not talking to other mans. When go to school not talking to mans.'

Considering the educational background of the women interviewed for this study, and indeed the educational status of the target population in general, there was little to suggest that the majority have a need for English in order to pursue further study. Given also the relatively low number of Muslim women in paid employment or seeking employment, it is also likely that the majority would not need English in order to seek employment.

Access to information

A gap exists in the provision of information regarding eligibility to classes. A majority of the women interviewed indicated that they learned about English language classes through friends or relatives. It appears, therefore, that information is being passed on through the support network to the women

themselves. This increases the possibility of the women being misinformed about language classes. Furthermore, the women who sought information were unaware of the official channels through which such information is available. In such cases, the information they did obtain may have been influenced by the informant's own ideas about English language tuition or their own perceptions or attitudes towards learning English. Whilst this may have a positive effect on the decision by Muslim women to access classes, it may also prove detrimental if the support networks upon which the women rely for information are unsympathetic to the individual's need to learn English.

Internal factors

Cultural and religious

The cultural and religious affiliations of Muslim women, particularly those from non-European communities with more traditional views, may impinge on their decision to access or not access classes in two ways. First, some of the women indicated that they would feel uncomfortable attending mixed-sex classes. Whilst this is also related to individual contingencies, such as perceptions of English language classes, level of education and whether or not learning English was seen as a priority, most of the women indicated that they had, or would feel, a degree of discomfort attending mixed-sex classes. Respondents from the former Yugoslavia were an exception to this. They agreed that while mixed-sex classes may present a problem for women from 'more strict countries', they did not for themselves. For some women, mixed-sex classes were a key determiner in their decision not to access classes. For others, the need or desire to learn English overrode any discomfort they may have felt.

Secondly, a number of women faced opposition from unsympathetic spouses and/or other influential members of the support network. Members of the support networks, mostly female friends and relatives, exerted considerable influence on the decision by Muslim women to access or not access classes. This influence was related to the perception within the support networks of the role of Muslim women in society and in the domestic domain. When a Muslim woman has strong links with a support network which perceives English language proficiency as unnecessary, she is less likely to access classes. In the absence of a support network, Muslim women are not only more likely to have a stronger need for English — they are also less likely to succumb to the pressure to devote themselves entirely to the domestic domain.

The women's network

One of the most far-reaching findings of this study was the impact that the support network had on the decision by migrant Muslim women to access classes. On the one hand, women without strong support networks were more likely to realise the disadvantages of a low level of English proficiency as they were forced to attempt linguistically complex tasks associated with the external domains. On the other hand, women with strong support

networks, regardless of age, length of residence, age of children or employment status of husband, tended to use less English in the external domains and hence had less of a perceived need to learn English in order to perform tasks in these domains.

However, through the course of the study it became evident that there was a further dimension to the support network — a dimension which exerted far more influence than spousal beliefs and was deeply rooted in the cultural and religious belief systems of the women — that of the women's network.

According to key informant Hanifa Deen, it is often the existence of a strong support network that holds Muslim women back. Quoting a section from her book in which she talks to Belal Cleland (a former AMES Victoria senior administrator) she identifies two types of Muslim women: 'those [Muslim women in Australia] that are very aware and conscious and active' and those 'groups of women who are deprived of their rights, the non-joiners':

... but there are also groups of women who are deprived of their rights, the non-joiners who sometimes aren't allowed to join and it's not always the wicked husbands you know ... it's often grandmothers and mothers-in-law, aunts, and an entire female network who insist vehemently that Muslim women don't do this.

The 'women's network' and other existing support networks have the potential to limit the participation of Muslim women in the wider Australian community. Often the support network can exert such a strong influence on the individual that the individual is convinced there is no need to learn English, and has no desire to do so. The support network may work in two ways to limit the participation of Muslim women in English language classes and in the wider Australian community. Firstly, a strong support network may act as a barrier by fulfilling the language needs of the external domain to such an extent that the women never perceive a need for English. In response to the statement: 'My husband/children need to know English more than me because he works and they go to school', 14 out of the 23 women interviewed agreed. Sixteen respondents also stated that they relied on their husbands and children to write letters and fill in forms for them.

Secondly, a strong network of female friends and relatives may exert pressure on the individual to perform the daily tasks associated only with the domestic domain, stressing that this is their role according to culture, tradition and religion. In this case, the network operates to keep the women in the home with the message that they do not need to partake in the wider community. One respondent offered the following explanation: 'Many Muslim women stay at home and do cooking and cleaning, playing with children and Muslim woman's life is closed.' This respondent also commented on her friend who did not show any desire to access classes or learn English, 'I think she stays home because she is Muslim. She stays home and prays.'

For those respondents without spouses, female family members' attitudes towards attending mixed-sex classes exerted the same influence over their

decision to access classes as did the spouses' attitude for the married respondents. The indication is that the obligations felt by Muslim women towards home and family are not only related to their marital status but are also deeply rooted in their own sense of self, and in the cultural and religious expectations for Muslim females.

Whilst there can be no argument that Muslim women face disadvantages similar to those of their NESB peers, it is also the case that Muslim women, by virtue of the doctrines and cultural traditions that are tied to their religious beliefs, may have more personal barriers to fulfilling their literacy and language requirements than their non-Muslim NESB peers. In a study which sought to identify the categories of NESB women accessing ALBE provisions, Foster and Rado (1991) found that there were specific categories of NESB women who were likely to miss out on ALBE courses. Among them were women whose husbands were unsympathetic to their education and/or employment aspirations. Many Muslim women may fall into this category by virtue of the religious or cultural obligations, which in turn translate into unwillingness by either the women or their spouses to engage in activities they perceive as defiant of their religious doctrines or cultural beliefs. In light of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) suggestion that an individual's attitude towards the people and culture represented by a language may either impede or promote the acquisition of that language by the individual, it is conceivable that ethnic and religious partiality may indeed prove to be a barrier which may prevent some women from accessing ESL provisions. Of notable absence in Foster and Rado's list of women unlikely to access ALBE provisions is a category which directly addresses this. This category could be entitled 'women whose cultural or religious beliefs prohibit them from engaging in activities which may not coincide with their perceived roles in society'.

Of particular importance here is the finding that the Muslim women in the study do in fact perceive themselves as different from mainstream Australian society. Moreover, this perception is strongly connected to a deeply-felt need and desire to uphold an Islamic way of life in a country which essentially holds western values and principles as ideal. In response to the statement, 'As a Muslim woman, I feel I can live like non-Muslim Australians', 15 of the 23 respondents disagreed. Those women who felt it would be possible essentially perceived themselves as 'less Muslim', as one Indonesian respondent put it. Others acknowledged that living like non-Muslims would necessitate an abandonment of the Islamic way of life, which, due to their desire to maintain their Islamic principles, was impossible. Indeed, most women indicated that forsaking their Islamic way of life would be the only way to achieve complete integration into the mainstream and to live like the non-Muslim majority. Comments such as 'We have rules', 'In our religion you know, have to be you know like that. Any way this Muslim way', and '... because they [Australian mainstream society] are drinking ... because they are kissing. My mother-in-law she says always don't look TV, they are kissing, no clothing, they are ... All people don't like this way,

Australian ways', support the claim that Muslim women do indeed perceive themselves as different from mainstream Australian society.

Despite results showing that a majority of the Muslim women interviewed acknowledged the importance of English as an international language, and as the lingua franca of Australia (see responses to Statement 9 in Table 1), perceptions of English as a prestige language may in some cases be countermanded by feelings of religious exclusivity and a rejection of things western. At the heart of this attitude is a deeply-felt apprehension about Australian society and the pressure to adopt an Australian way of life. It is also the case that members of the women's network — mothers, mothers-in-law, aunts and grandmothers — condemn Australian values and use this to exert influence over other Muslim women. What this amounts to is the perpetuation of an Australian stereotype amongst Muslim women, and a desire to abolish any kind of influence which may result in the abandonment of Islamic ways. It also amounts to an invisible barrier between Muslim women and the western (Australian) way of life. This barrier is not always in Muslim women's best interests as far as learning English is concerned, but it is the outcome of the tension between trying to maintain a Muslim identity in a society which is perceived to be in opposition to the values and ideals of Islam.

Desire to participate

The desire to participate in the wider Australian community is influenced by the desire to learn English, employment aspirations and attitudes towards English language classes. The results of the study indicated that the desire to learn English is one of the most important factors influencing the decision by Muslim women to access or not access English language tuition. Eighteen of the 23 respondents indicated that they would like to learn English to be able to talk to Australian people, and 21 of the respondents acknowledged that learning English was important because they live in Australia.

The desire to participate is also closely linked to the desire to gain employment, with 14 of the respondents indicating that they would like to learn English to find a job. It is influenced by individual attitudes to English language classes. There appeared to be two mutually exclusive perceptions of English language classes. Where language classes are perceived as a learning experience, and viewed only as a contribution to the individual's education or as necessary for gaining employment, Muslim women were more likely to access these classes. On the other hand, if classes are perceived as a social experience, women who had little desire, or were apprehensive about participation in the wider community, were less likely to access classes. This suggests that a lack of desire to participate, coupled with a perception of English language classes as a form of social participation, can prove to be a barrier to access. It also suggests that a perception of English language classes as a means of realising high priority aspirations, such as gainful employment, is an important factor in the decision to access them, and may affect this

decision, regardless and independent of a desire to participate. This is particularly evident in the fact that eight out of the ten respondents who had accessed classes indicated that they would like to find a job, whilst only six of the 13 women who had not accessed classes agreed with this item.

ESL needs

English language needs, particularly in the external domains, exerted a strong influence on the decision by Muslim women to access English language provisions. The strongest areas of need expressed by the subgroup of women interviewed who had accessed classes were gaining employment and/or access to further studies, and the ability to complete linguistically demanding tasks associated with the external domain.

Whilst most of the women interviewed for this study recognised a need to learn English as the lingua franca of Australia, whether or not this need was prioritised was contingent on other factors including age, home and family life, educational background, and, in particular, the support network.

Access to a strong support network, and indeed the women's network as discussed earlier, has perhaps the most far-reaching influence on the need to learn English. In the absence of such networks, Muslim women were more likely to encounter situations which require a degree of linguistic proficiency and hence developed a need to learn English in order to cope with the linguistic demands of living in an English-speaking society. This is consistent with Mudaly's (1992) finding that long-term resident Turkish women were conscious of a lack of independence once their support networks were no longer available to provide that support.

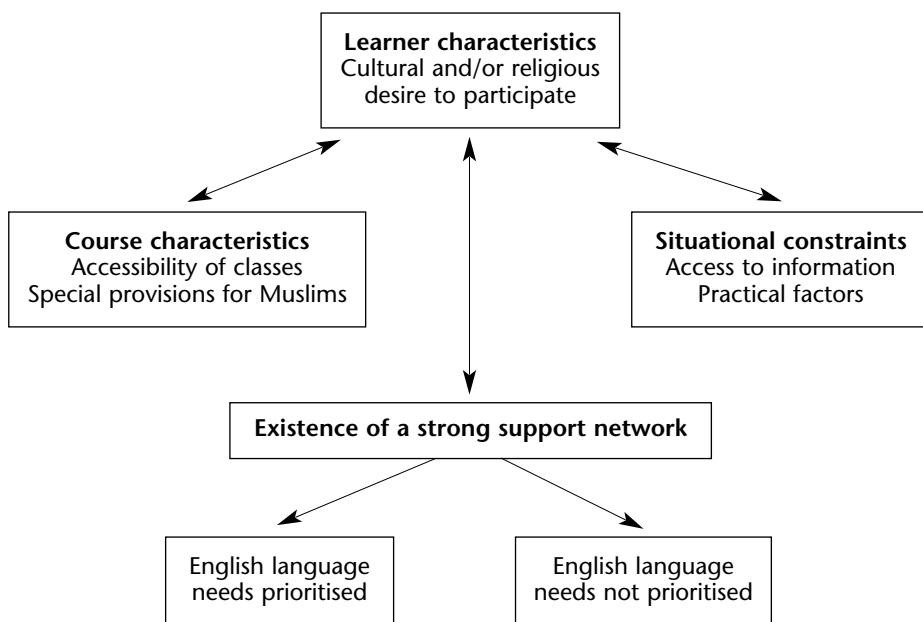
Practical factors

Factors such as age, marital status, number of children, educational background, and period of residence are all individual contingencies which impact on the decision by migrant Muslim women to access classes. Of particular importance is the extent of home duties. Women with young children and babies, and older women with adult children were less likely to access classes — the former because of responsibilities towards home and family, and the latter because they relied on their children to fulfil language-related tasks for them. Recent arrivals, and women with school-aged children, were more likely to access classes either because they could not rely on their children to fulfil tasks, or because they had more time to devote to activities outside the home.

The relationship of the factors to each other

The internal and external factors described in this paper operate in a complex interrelationship such that no one factor can be distinguished as the single deciding factor in the decision to access or not access English language provisions. At the core of this relationship is the need to learn English,

which is strongly dependent on other factors. This relationship operates in such a way as to determine the priority placement of English in the lives of Muslim women. Where the need for English is so strong that it overrides all other factors, Muslim women are more likely to access classes. On the other hand, where other factors operate in such a way that they prove to be a barrier to access, the need for English is not prioritised and the women are less likely to access classes. Moreover, if these barriers stem from external factors such as lack of information, inability to access classes or time constraints, the need for English may exist but may never be realised until one or all of these factors change. However, it is more often the case that several internal and external factors combine to determine the prioritisation of English language proficiency in the lives of Muslim women. The single most important factor affecting the need for English may be pinpointed as the existence of the support network, which will directly determine whether or not the need to learn English will surface. The following diagram illustrates the relationship of the factors to each other and how this relationship operates to prioritise the need to acquire English language skills.



Conclusion

Several issues emerged from this study which need to be addressed if there is to be any change in the trend of participation by Muslim women. Above all, the results of the study showed a need for Muslim women to be seen as a distinct group within the larger group of NESB migrant women. This can be achieved in two ways. Firstly, Muslim women's lack of access to informa-

tion about relevant services needs to be addressed by AMEP providers and relevant Government agencies. In the recent past, this has been remedied to some extent with information on available services now being provided in a number of languages. Fliers, brochures and pamphlets have been distributed to community organisations and schools within the Muslim community. However, the issue of 'the women's network' still remains. There is a need for support networks to be seen as a valuable and viable avenue for filtering information to women in need of language and literacy services.

The other important issue, that of special provisions for Muslim women, has also been addressed with the introduction of the Special Preparatory classes in 1998. These classes targeted refugee and humanitarian clients among whom were Muslim women, mainly from the Middle East and Africa. In Perth, where this study took place, two of the classes offered were for women only and were held in community centres around the Perth metropolitan region. They provided up to 100 hours of tuition in preparation for the 510-hour entitlement at Adult Migrant English centres. Prior to this, at the time of the study, the only service that catered specifically for Muslim women was a two-hour English class held at a community Mosque. This class was organised by the Mosque and the women who participated paid a small fee for the service.

Further progress can be made towards encouraging Muslim women to access their language entitlements if providers and policy makers have a better understanding of the cultural and religious issues which exert such a great influence on the daily lives of Muslim women in Australia.

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English language teacher socialisation during the practicum

Abstract

Language teacher preparation in many countries consists of course work on a university campus followed by some student teaching (the practicum) in a variety of settings. Teaching practice has come to be recognised as one of the most important parts of the teacher education program. During the practicum, the beginning teacher is socialised into all aspects of the teaching profession both inside and outside the classroom. However, in English language teaching (ELT) there is a paucity of data on what exactly takes place during field experiences. The purpose of this exploratory study is, in part, to address this gap. This paper outlines a case study of one trainee teacher during his teaching practicum. Results indicate that the teacher encountered some problems, including unclear lines of communication and a weak support structure for trainee teachers at the school during this socialisation process. Recommendations include more quality collaboration between the triad of the supervisor (the teacher-training institution), the cooperating teacher (the school) and the trainee teacher, whereby each participant has a more clearly defined role to play.

Introduction

Teaching practice has come to be recognised as one of the most important aspects of the teacher education program (Funk and Hoffman 1982). As Clark (1988: 1) points out: 'If the literature and folklore of teacher education agree on one point, it is that the student teaching experience or practicum is important.' The process of teacher socialisation really only begins during the period of the practicum. However, as Richards and Crookes (1988: 22) point out, little is known about '[what] exactly takes place during field experiences' in English language teaching (ELT). This study was designed to provide information about the process of socialisation based on a case study of the experiences of one trainee teacher because, as Richards and Crookes (1988: 22) note, 'such information is essential in determining the contribution of field experiences to the student's professional development'.

For the purposes of this paper, socialisation means the process of becoming a member of a specific group, the teaching profession. This socialisation process includes learning how to teach and all the demands associated with teaching, such as coping with school rules inside and outside the classroom,

following the school rules for lesson planning, following or developing curricula, learning the routines of the classroom, and learning how to interact with school authorities and colleagues. This paper reports on the influences of field-based experiences (the practicum) on the socialisation process of one teacher of English language in Singapore. I begin by reviewing the research literature on the influences of the practicum on teacher socialisation.

Teacher socialisation and the practicum

Bliss and Reck define teacher socialisation as 'the process by which an individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers' (1991: 6). They go on to argue that teacher socialisation is a 'learning process which requires developmental growth on the part of the novice teacher' (1991: 6). Zeichner and Grant (1981) outline three major components in preservice teacher education programs which can influence teacher socialisation. These are:

- ❖ Course work in general education and academic specialisations;
- ❖ Methods and foundation courses within education units; and
- ❖ Field-based experiences in the schools.

Schlechty (1990) links teacher socialisation with teacher induction and suggests that preservice teacher education, especially teaching practice, is an important feature of the induction process. Schlechty continues, 'If preservice teacher education is to be conceptually and theoretically linked to the socialisation of teachers, the only means of making this linkage is by conceiving of preservice education as part of the induction process' (1990: 29).

One of the biggest influences within the preservice teacher education course is the field-based experiences beginning teachers encounter in real teaching situations. According to Huling, field-based experiences offer teacher candidates a place to 'observe and work with real students, teachers, and curriculum in natural settings' (1997: 1). Different types of field experiences identified in the practicum have been classified as direct, or indirect (Cruikshank and Armaline 1986). Direct experiences include supervised and unsupervised teaching experiences, while indirect experiences involve observing teaching.

The practicum can be held in a campus-based language institute or in local school districts. However, campus-based practicum experiences are very different from working in schools off campus (Richards and Crookes 1988). Richards and Crookes (1988: 12) point out that campus-based programs may be so well supported with well-trained staff and superior support systems that they 'do not offer realistic teaching experiences'. Nonetheless, Richards and Crookes, in their survey of MA programs in the USA, found that most of the field experiences during the practicum occurred in an ESL program on the university campus, even though such experiences provide a 'limited exposure to the real world of TESOL' (1988: 22).

This is why Zeichner and Grant (1981) have argued that it is important to distinguish between the socialisation role of campus-based and field-based elements of preservice teacher education programs. They argue this because each component represents different and sometimes competing notions of the process of learning to teach. Regarding the practicum, it seems that circumstances in individual schools influence the socialisation process of preservice teachers. For example, Calderhead (1988) found that the impressions preservice teachers acquired during field experiences affected the nature of their learning experience — for some, confirming the impressions they had about the nature of teaching prior to the teacher education course, for others, changing them. For instance, in one setting the school policy may be to follow a textbook as part of a prescribed curriculum, while in another setting teachers may have the freedom to construct their own curriculum. Some settings may have high levels of collegiality, while others do not. Consequently, it seems that circumstances in different settings in which student teachers are placed may have different effects on their experiences as they learn to teach (Calderhead 1988).

Richards and Crookes (1988), in a major survey of MA TESOL programs on the objectives of the practicum, found that a diverse and vague range of skills were identified as being important for preservice teachers to learn. Richards and Crookes argue that these include 'classroom management skills, lesson planning, awareness of teaching style, and ability to interact with students' (1988:11).

Another important (and controversial) issue concerning the practicum is the placement of the trainee teacher with a competent cooperating teacher (sometimes called a mentor teacher). Slick's (1995) study pointed out the tendency for many cooperating teachers not to be trained in how to work with trainee teachers because of lack of time and resources. Richards and Crookes also noted that the role of the cooperating teacher has been poorly defined, and that 'classroom teachers are usually not well prepared for the task of supervising a student teacher' (1988: 23).

Brinton and Holten's (1989) case study of 20 novice ESL teachers during their ten-week supervised practicum outlined how these teachers used dialogue journals to construct and revise their understandings of themselves as teachers. They found that these trainee teachers were concerned with understanding their own classrooms, learning from their mentor teacher, and mastering the art of language teaching in general. However, they pointed out that a major limitation of their study was that they used quantitative methods exclusively to tabulate the frequency of entries and comments. Brinton and Holten (1989: 349) continued: 'No attempt was made to assess the comments qualitatively'.

The study reported in this paper is an attempt to assess qualitatively the comments of one trainee teacher during his practicum period. Qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies were used in order to emphasise the importance of the context-specific nature of the process of socialisation and

the contributions of the individual teacher to his/her process of becoming a teacher. Quantitative studies in teacher socialisation tend to focus on the socialisation of groups, which ignores how individual teachers vary as they are socialised into specific contexts. As Kuzmic has observed:

Quantitative research designs have tended to focus on groups of teachers, which has two harmful consequences for understanding the socialisation process: (1) perspectives of individual beginning teachers have not been explored as they formed, developed and changed in the process. (2) With a focus on groups, individuals have come to be viewed as powerless to resist the biographical or institutional forces which shape their views of teaching so as to conform with traditional norms and values which operate within schools. (1993: 16)

Context and background

This study took place in Singapore. Singapore has a heterogeneous multi-ethnic population of more than three million people made up of 77 per cent Chinese, 14 per cent Malays, 7.6 per cent Indians and 1.4 per cent persons of other ethnic groups (Singapore Department of Statistics 1999). The Singaporean school system is divided into six years of primary, and four years of secondary, education. These schools are divided into government-funded neighborhood schools and privately funded schools. The context of this study was within a neighbourhood secondary school. English is the medium of instruction in all schools in Singapore.

In Singapore, the English language has a special place: it is the language of government administration and it is the medium of instruction in all schools. As observed by Ho: 'it has to be understood that one of the aims of the education system of the country is for all students to learn two languages, English and the mother tongue' (Ho 1998: 19). For example, the mother tongue of a Singaporean-Chinese would be Mandarin Chinese, of a Singaporean-Malay, it would be Malay, and that of a Singaporean-Tamil, would be Tamil (Gupta 1998). Gupta continues: 'The first language is the main medium of education (which is now always English) while the second language is the other language studied (usually the official mother tongue)'. (1998: 117). However, it is not easy to classify the type of English used in the school system because there are many in Singapore who use English as a first, second and foreign language, and a few (usually from the older generation) who do not do not know any English (Gupta 1998). Although second and/or foreign English language teaching methodologies have been used in the past when teaching English in Singapore, Foley has observed that recently this is slowly changing to using 'methodologies of English as the dominant language of education — using a first-language approach to teaching' (1998: 248).

The student teacher in this case study was studying for a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore. Each trainee teacher enters the PGDE program with a Bachelor of Arts degree obtained from another university. The students in the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) program take a 10-month program

in which they are exposed to teaching practice and theory classes. Typically, each PGDE (secondary) student undergoes coursework at the institution followed by teaching practice in a secondary school outside the institution. The NIE is the sole teacher training institution in Singapore and is responsible for the supervision of the teaching practice component of all Singaporean trainee teachers.

Teaching practice usually occurs towards the end of the PDGE program where the teachers are placed in schools for nine weeks of practice teaching. The school to which this student teacher was assigned was a neighbourhood school with students mainly from middle to lower middle class socio-economic groups. While I (the researcher) was his supervisor for Teaching Practice (TP), I observed him teach three times, twice for English and once for mathematics (his 'second' subject), as was required by the system. The researcher (the author) has been a teacher educator at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore for the past three years. The trainee teacher was my student for a reading module during his PGDE course. I was later appointed his supervisor for teaching practice. I asked the trainee teacher for permission to study how he was socialised into the school and the profession during the practicum along with my formal observations of his teaching. He agreed to allow me access to this information.

Methodology

Qualitative research procedures were used in the collection and analysis of the data (Bogdan and Biklen 1982; Glesne and Peshkin 1992). The full period of data collection was the nine weeks of the practicum period. Data were collected by means of electronic mail 'discussions', telephone calls, classroom observations, and two in-depth interviews, one before, and one directly following, the practicum. Mishler (1986) and Spradely (1979) have pointed out the benefits of in-depth interviews in gauging research participants' attitudes and points of view. Additionally, I kept a reflective journal to record informal encounters with the teacher as a daily log of research activity and as a form of personal reflection (Glesne and Peshkin 1992; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Within this qualitative approach, the emphasis during the collection and analysis of data was on understanding and interpretation. During data analysis, the interview sessions were transcribed for accurate interpretation of emergent patterns and themes. The data were placed in categories through analytic induction (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). This technique involved scanning the data for categories of phenomena, and for relationships among these categories. The categories that emerged were compared to the categories derived through the analysis of the interviews, classroom observations and the field notes. To help start data analysis, I used Pennington and Urmston's (1998) general categories as an initial *a priori* heuristic for analysis of the data generated by the interviews, the emails, telephone calls and classroom observations. These categories were instructional planning, teaching approaches, professional relationships and responsibilities, and the teacher's perceptions

and values. However, I was not restricted to these, and remained open to further categories as they emerged in the data.

Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that 'member checks', or the participant's reading of the data for comments and interpretations, are crucial for establishing credibility in a qualitative study. The trainee teacher read, suggested some amendments, and then authenticated the final draft of this paper. Consequently, his comments helped shape this final written product.

Findings

The practicum

I report on the teacher's socialisation (rather than his teaching performance on the teaching practice [TP] as this remains confidential) while he was on teaching practice. I started the post interview by asking for a general comment about his experiences on teaching practice, with special emphasis on his socialisation as a teacher of English language. The teacher said that it was very important for him to plan his lessons during his teaching practice. In the three classes I observed during the practicum, he always had a detailed lesson plan. This was probably because he was required (by the school and the teacher training institution) to have a teaching folder with detailed lesson plans for each of the classes he had to teach. However, nobody from the school looked at this folder. I, as his supervisor, was required to check that he had, in fact, fulfilled this requirement. He said that the syllabus played a big role in his planning, as his cooperating teachers had informed him that they were sticking close to the formal syllabus. He reported that he was controlled to a certain extent by the examination system that was already in place because he had to follow what the cooperating teacher (CT) was going to do in the classes he took over. It appears, therefore this trainee teacher was pragmatic and realistic about the demands of the situation as he wanted to conform to the requests and suggestions made by the CTs in both subject areas.

As the interview progressed, I could see he was focusing on two main and related topics from the school culture that were influential for his socialisation into the system: support and communication. In relation to support from the school and colleagues, the teacher said that he (and the other four trainee teachers) felt left out of the process completely from the first time they walked into the school. He revealed:

We [the trainee teachers] feel like strangers in this school because we have never been introduced to the staff or student population ... which explains why some teachers don't even notice our existence, especially since we are chucked in the Resource Room. Some students even thought we were salesmen trying to promote books initially! Consequently, we had to put in more effort to establish our credibility in front of our students.

When I visited the school as his supervisor I had great difficulty in finding him as he was placed in a small, dimly lit room, the 'Resource Room', which was located behind the staff room, the other side of a room with a number

of photocopying machines. There were no desks — only one big table for all the five trainee teachers to share. The trainee teacher did not meet any of the staff at this school except for the heads of department (HOD) of English and mathematics and his cooperating teachers (CT) for each subject. However, he said that he did not have much support from his HODs or from his CTs in either subject area. He also said that he noticed that there did not seem to be much collaboration between the regular teachers. He reflected:

The teachers do not work as a team and lots of politicking. Consequently, teachers become wary of one another and do not share resources nor experience freely. It's like if one teacher asks a question like: 'Do you have any resources for teaching [a particular subject]? The other replies: 'Not sure. I just teach them.'

With respect to communication, the teacher said that neither he nor the other four trainees on teaching practice were officially informed when different events were to take place. However, if, as a result, they failed to turn up, they were chastised by either the HOD (if it was a departmental meeting) or the principal (if it was a school event). For example, the teacher said that he was never informed about the principal's regular meetings with the teachers:

Every week, the principal is supposed to have a dialogue session with all the teachers, which is known as 'contact time'. But we [trainee teachers] never know whether contact time is on or cancelled because there are no notices nor announcements. The only way we know whether there is contact time is by word of mouth ... there is no official notice posted! And what if we didn't hear about it? Well, nobody seems to care but some teachers will gossip about you if you had not shown up. The same applies to Department Meetings. We [trainee teachers] missed one at the beginning because nobody seemed to know about it ... until we actually missed it!

He also noticed conflicting messages within the school when he did receive communications. One such example was when the principal said one thing about information technology (IT), and the HOD gave a conflicting interpretation.

On one hand, the principal would like teachers to harness IT in teaching but the HOD of the IT Department 'gives hell' to people who would like to make use of the computer lab. The reason the HOD of IT gives is 'the students will spoil the equipment!' So what are we to do?

He summed up the general atmosphere of the school when he commented on the relationship between the principal and the teachers:

Whenever the principal enters the canteen, teachers having their lunch will try to finish their meals as soon as possible and then leave. Those who are 'caught' behind will maintain their silence and not talk unless one is being talked to. The school has been run so badly that even 'old boy' teachers have asked for 'transfer out' by the end of this semester.

The result was that he was less than enthusiastic about his teaching career after his practicum experience. He said that he could not teach (full-time) in that school because of the culture of the school; he stated: 'I personally feel

that I am unable to fit into the school.' He was not happy about the future prospect of teaching in the school, and hoped that he would be posted (as he was) to a different school for his first year as a teacher.

Discussion

During the period of the practicum, this trainee teacher had a tendency to focus on himself and on his own teaching behaviours, rather than on his students' learning. According to Kagan (1992), this is a natural progression of development for trainee teachers, whose initial focus on self as teacher may be a very important part of the socialisation process during the practicum. Kagan remarks that a mentor or supervisor should not try to hurry the novice teacher through this stage, as this will not benefit the beginning teacher: 'Attempts by supervisors to shorten or abort a student teacher's period of inward focus may be counterproductive.' (1992: 155). As his supervisor, I was non-directive, and had intended to intervene only if requested by the teacher. However, this trainee teacher, despite experiencing certain frustrations during his practicum period, never asked me to intervene at any time.

The trainee teacher was realistic about the situation of his teaching in the neighbourhood school where he was placed for his practicum. Pennington and Urmston (1998) found similar responses from the graduating student teachers from a TESOL teacher education program in Hong Kong. Additionally, the trainee teacher in this study said that he was greatly influenced by his supervisor and not the cooperating teacher and/or the principal during the period of his practicum. Again, Pennington and Urmston's (1998) study in Hong Kong made a similar discovery about how influential teacher-training supervisors were during the practicum. Furthermore, Borg's (1998) study also indicated that the teacher featured in the case study was greatly influenced by his supervisor and the training course itself. However, the trainee teacher in this study was most unsure about professional relationships within the school. This may have been because of the trainee's perceived lack of support from his senior colleagues, and his (and the other trainee teachers') sense of confusion concerning communication within the school.

How does one evaluate the socialisation process of this teacher trainee during his practicum? Huling (1997) has noted that the place of the practicum in preservice teacher education is complex to evaluate. For example, the questions of how and what trainee teachers learn from these early field experiences are not easy to answer. Nevertheless, two issues were important in shaping the socialisation of the trainee teacher in this study: (the lack of) support, and communication.

In this trainee teacher's case, support was lacking from the school authorities: the principal, the HOD and the CT. The trainee said that during the period of his practicum, his teacher-training supervisor was most influential and helpful in guiding him through the process. He also rated his fellow trainee teachers as being helpful during his practicum period, followed by students who were willing to provide useful feedback. The trainee said that

the more experienced teachers were somewhat influential, but the senior teachers and the principal were not very influential during the period of his practicum. Support from the school that the trainee teacher is placed in is crucial for the smooth socialisation of a novice teacher. During teaching practice, apart from the supervisor, the most influential person for the trainee is the cooperating teacher (Guyton and McIntyre 1990). It is, therefore, imperative that a trainee teacher on the practicum be placed with a competent cooperating teacher. However, it seems that many cooperating teachers may be untrained for working with trainee teachers because of lack of time and resources (Slick 1995; Richards and Crookes 1988). While cooperating teachers and supervisors share the goal of preparing effective teachers, they differ in their perspectives on the importance of theory and practice: supervisors generally emphasise theory, while cooperating teachers stress practical experience. With these differences in perspectives and emphasis, it is evident that collaboration between the supervisor and the CT becomes necessary.

During the practicum period (nine weeks), the cooperating teacher in this study never contacted me (the supervisor), and apart from a few comments made in passing when I visited the school that the teacher was 'doing fine', no other collaboration was initiated. The cooperating teacher who was assigned to the trainee teacher in this study was only made aware of his position the day before the trainee teacher arrived in the school. Additionally, this CT was not trained in mentoring trainee teachers. The trainee teacher, for the most part, had to teach in unsupervised classes as the CT saw the NIE trainee as someone who would take over his class. As the trainee stated in the interview, both the HOD and the CT were overextended during that term and could not devote time to mentoring the trainee teacher. It was therefore not surprising that they did not have time to discuss the trainee with the supervisor.

One conclusion from these observations would seem to be that, before cooperating teachers are appointed to mentor a trainee teacher, they should be fully trained in the mentoring role. This training could and should be done by the teacher training institution that the trainee comes from. In that way, closer ties can be fostered between the triad of supervisor, cooperating teacher (and thus the school), and the trainee. It is beyond the scope of this paper to suggest what should be included in such a training program. Nevertheless, previous studies have suggested that mentors (and thus cooperating teachers) act as sources of advice, critical friends, and instructional models and guide the professional development of the trainee teachers (Elliott and Calderhead 1993). Additionally, the school should consider reducing the workload of the appointed cooperating teachers so that they can devote sufficient time to the mentoring process. What happens in many schools at present (at least in Singapore) is that the cooperating teachers already hold a position of responsibility, and an additional position of responsibility as cooperating teacher only adds to the workload, thus putting the whole process of mentoring under a strain.

Teacher education institutions may need to be more involved in the selection and training of cooperating teachers in order to maximise the likelihood that the trainee teachers have a rewarding experience during their practicum. Additionally, the cooperating teachers, once selected and trained, must be remunerated for the increased responsibilities of supervising trainee teachers and recognised within their own school by having a reduced workload. In this way, a posting as a cooperating teacher will not be seen as a burden.

Jordell (1987) has suggested that the single most influential issue on teacher socialisation for beginning teachers is the relationships they form with their colleagues during their first years as teachers. If this is true, then more attention should be paid to helping CTs, their colleagues, and trainee teachers in ways of developing collegial relationships to ensure that student teachers on teaching practice have as much support as possible from the school. The trainee teacher in this study had little or no communication with any of the full-time teachers in the school during his practicum. The trainee felt that they took the attitude that he would only be in the school for nine weeks, and as such they did not consider him to be full-time. This brings up the question of who should accept responsibility for the trainee teacher during the period of the practicum.

During the practicum, a trainee teacher may be in a vulnerable position because of the question of who controls his or her development. For example, should the school or the teacher training institution (the supervisor) be responsible? Where English teachers undergo their teaching practice in campus-based English language programs, this question is more easily answered because the campus-based programs are usually attached to the training program, and, thus, are more tightly controlled by the teacher training institution.

However, when teaching practice takes place in off-campus programs, such as in school districts, the lines of responsibility become less clear. Recently, and in order to address the issue of who should take responsibility for the trainees during the practicum, the NIE in Singapore instituted a new model for the supervision of PGDE students. This new system is called 'The Partnership Model' and may go some way toward addressing more clearly the problem of who takes responsibility for trainee teachers during the practicum. Chellappah, Chiew and Gopinathan (1999) note that the Partnership Model involves more collaboration between the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the schools such that the schools will take more responsibility than before for developing the teachers. Originally, and in the case of the trainee teacher during this study, the NIE supervisor conducted three classroom observations and this accounted for about 80 per cent of the trainee's grade. In the new system, the supervisor conducts one classroom observation and this accounts for less than 50 per cent of the grade. The partnership model works as follows: the school principal is in overall charge of the trainee teachers in the school. The principal then appoints a school coordinating

mentor (SCM) from the school, who takes care of the NIE trainees in the school during their practicum. The SCM will appoint cooperating teachers (CT) to guide each NIE trainee. The SCM also works closely with the NIE supervision coordinator (NSC). The NSC supervises all the trainee teachers in the school, regardless of subject area, and acts as overall coordinator of the practicum. At the end of the practicum period, a practicum panel meets to decide the grades of the trainee teachers. This panel is chaired by the school principal and is composed of the SCM and NSC.

Along with the school, and the teacher training institution, the trainee teacher himself or herself also carries some of the responsibility to ensure that his or her socialisation process goes as smoothly as possible. Just as teachers prepare and plan lessons, so too must they prepare for their practicum posting. For example, trainee teachers may draw up a list of questions about the school and requirements for trainee teachers on their practicum. These questions may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- ❖ **School:** What is the organisation of the school? Do I have a copy of the staff handbook, school rules, and any other school brochure? Who are the non-teaching staff (clerical, computer and science technicians, librarians and photocopy helpers) that I can ask for assistance?
- ❖ **Organisation:** Whom do I report to directly? Does the school have an induction program for trainee teachers on their teaching practicum? How often should I meet my mentor (CT)? What are my duties during recess, lunch, and after school. Do I have extra-curricular activities? Do I have to teach remedial classes? What is my timetable? Where are my classrooms?
- ❖ **Subject:** What classes will I be teaching and is there a written syllabus? What are the required textbooks? What are the schemes of work I need to follow? How do I do assessment and record keeping?
- ❖ **Pupils:** What level are the pupils and what English language skills have they attained? Who taught them last year and can I talk to that person? How should I counsel and/or discipline my pupils?

Conclusion

In the study outlined in this paper the teacher experienced a short (nine-week) placement in a school he had never been in before. It seems that the school regarded taking on this role as a burden, and the cooperating teachers seemed to see their mentoring role as a burden too. Indeed, I have heard that the cooperating teachers complain that they have to re-teach the classes the new teacher conducted while on his or her practicum. However, the teaching practicum is very important for the socialisation process of a beginning teacher. The way a school responds to the arrival of trainee teachers on their practicum and the support they give these neophyte teachers often determines their attitude to the teaching profession. The support and guidance

of a competent and trained cooperating teacher can help build positively on the trainee's success in the initial teacher education course. What is called for is more collaboration between the triad of the supervisor (the teacher training institution), the cooperating teacher (including the principal and HODs), and the trainee teacher. It remains to be seen whether the Partnership Model recently instituted in Singapore will be successful in promoting this collaboration.

Learning to teach, as Doyle suggests, involves 'learning the texture of the classroom and the sets of behaviours congruent with the environmental demands of that setting' (1977: 31). Teachers can really only experience this type of learning during practice teaching. However, when interpreting findings from research such as that discussed above, it is important to remember that each country has its own unique context with different traditions of schools and schooling, teaching, and teacher education. Therefore, it may be difficult to generalise from the study reported here unless researchers also take into account the particular situations and traditions of the context in which the teachers are training. For example, the student teaching model or practicum has a very different meaning in Australia from in the United States. In the former, preservice teachers experience several short practicums in different settings during their teacher education courses, while in the latter, students spend a full university semester in a school. Nevertheless, the role of any particular socialising aspect of these experiences, such as the selection and role of the cooperating teachers, has many similar consequences in all these systems. Further research on how trainee English language teachers are socialised during the practicum should be carried out in specific contexts, such as off-campus school districts and language schools, in order to build up a profile of beginning English language teacher socialisation in diverse contexts. Case studies on such topics could help teacher trainees on language teacher education programs to have more realistic expectations of what awaits them during teaching practice.

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