

# Structural and Personal Influences in Beginning English Teachers' Professional Socialization

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This study has examined the relationship between individual socialization content and effectiveness professional socialization of beginning English teachers in Pakistan. The content of professional socialization comprised four variables including teaching skill, professional training, association with senior colleagues, and organizational environment. Effective socialization was defined as the level of job satisfaction with the organizational culture and professional learning programs. The survey method, with a detailed valid questionnaire, was used to collect the data from randomly selected sample from the various strata, i.e., 150 beginning English teachers. The data was passed through descriptive univariate analysis first and then linear and multiple regression tests were conducted. The results presented a positive relationship between effective socialization (DV) and individual variable of socialization content (IV). The study also discovered many challenges to effective socialization process related to teachers' classroom management, individual and institutional professional learning program, attitudes and counselling from senior colleagues and headteachers, adjustment to organizational culture and practices. The study suggested a need to focus on workplace learning programs with a mind shift from off-the-job trainings to the real-life mentoring and socialization programs. The study hopes to contribute in addressing the significant issue of second language teacher education and professional socialization and how well the potential challenges can be addressed.

**Key words:** *Professional socialization, classroom management, beginning teachers, senior colleagues, organizational culture*



## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

The current endeavors to reform English language teaching both at governmental and private sector are confronted with multiple organizational and structural challenges. In this changing scenario, the professional socialization of English teachers is the focus of all these reformative efforts. Various standards of English teacher professionalism and targets of professional learning have been set by the government and private organizations to enhance teacher professional socialization. Currently, the professional enhancement of (English) teachers, like all other science teachers, is dependent on the traditional off-the-job trainings schedules which take away the language teachers away from their real classroom, deliver the lectures of ideal pedagogical practices and teaching behaviours and finally drop them again at their real classrooms where the teachers, often, find it quite incompatible to incorporate what has been taught in these trainings (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015). Whereas, it is now believed that the real-life mentoring of teachers must be related with their teaching beliefs, pedagogical practices, relationship with their senior colleagues and administrators, organizational culture and latest trends and technologies in the area of second language acquisition (State of Victoria- Department of Education and Training, 2016). The beginning teachers are more vulnerable to all these uncertain academic situations with their jobs and organizations and thus they often express their concerns, mostly anxieties and frustrations, related to their occupational enculturation and personal adjustment into their newly joined teaching profession. The beginning teachers have been the focus of studies related to the professional socialization as these early years of adjustment offer many personal and structural challenges to their professional life emerging from the doubts associated with professionalism, concerns of job security, ambiguities related to image of good teacher, developing a positive or negative professional self-image and the critical review of their professional and pedagogical choices (Richards, Templin & Graber, 2014).

The conditions of English language teaching and teachers in Pakistan are not so encouraging and faced with multiple challenges ranging from pedagogical to political, and economic to social in their nature. Some major problems can be listed as inexperienced English teachers, wavering educational and language policies, incompatible, outdated syllabi, unrealistic, ineffective teaching methodologies, lack of modern ICT integrated classroom, extraordinary large classes and improvised administrative organizational structure (Warsi, 2004; Mansoor, 2009; Mirza, 2009; Rehman, 2009; Tahir & Qadir, 2012a). Being the largest teaching community in Pakistan, English teachers have always been the focus on any educational reforms in the country. The newly inducted English teachers hold the burden of gigantic expectations of the government, society, administrators, senior colleagues and above all the learners. They are offered the induction trainings (practicum) to smoothly enter the teaching profession and their organizations. In Pakistan, there are 209 teacher training institutions where most of these beginning teachers pass their time mostly before joining the profession and then during service



also (NIMES, 2017). Equipped with these off-the-job trainings, these beginning English teachers make plans to adjust themselves in their professions, though merely these induction trainings or refresher course are not enough to meet the real classroom and professional challenges (Mirza, 2009). These beginning English teachers, however, need much more for successful professional socialization, e.g., the professional and personal support from their senior colleagues, appropriate guidance and self-esteem from administrators, provision of facilitating organizational culture, expertise to integrate ICT with their teaching practices. However, the English language teaching reforms (ELTR) project by Higher Education Commission Pakistan, induction and professional development trainings by Higher Education Department, Pakistan, faculty development programs of universities, foreign and indigenous scholarships, English departments conferences, seminars, short term trainings, ELT societies in Pakistan, British Council, ETS, USAID, local NGOs and private institutions are contributing much to the professional socialization of beginning English teachers in Pakistan (Tahir, Qadir & Malik, 2014).

### **Motivation of the Study**

The motivation behind conducting this study was to understand and quantify the various kinds of factors influencing the process of professional socialization of new English teachers in their career entry stage. The study has mainly studied the personal and structural or organization influences related to teaching skills, professional education, relationship with headteachers and senior colleagues and organizational culture. It was explored what various pedagogical and classroom management challenges the beginning English teachers face in their real life classrooms, how much individual and institutional learning program influence their continuous professional development, how and how much the headteachers and senior colleagues directly or indirectly influence the organizational adjustment of these neophytes and finally how much the organizational culture contribute in the effectiveness of professionalization of beginning English teachers. Being the part of English teaching community, the researchers were highly motivated to understand this socialization process of their junior English teachers. The researchers believed that the positive influences from all these sections would ultimately contribute to the job satisfaction and successful professional socialization of these teachers.

### **Need to Study Teacher Socialization in Local Perspective**

According to Zeichner and Gore (1990), it is quite misrepresentative if the teacher socialization experiences are generalized for every situation and every peculiar cultural condition. Thus, it was the need that the socializing influences pertaining to beginning English teachers in Pakistan must be explored and discussed distinctively from the studies conducted in another cultural scenario. The studies conducted in Pakistani context would ultimately contribute to the already existing knowledge repertoire in this area generally and to the Pakistani English teaching community, the headteachers, administrators and policymakers particularly. The study would

bring forward the self-perceptions of Pakistani beginning English teachers about their professional socialization process so that they can better control it.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teacher Socialization: A Significant Area of Study

The extensive study on the areas related to teacher professional development and institutional socialization presents many valuable studies on teacher organizational socialization and professional development content, especially with reference to Pakistani academic context (e.g., Illahi, 2016; Khan & Afridi, 2017; Policy and Planning Wing, 2009; Tahir & Qadir, 2012; Jadoon, Chishti, Afzaal, & Afzal, 2020). The related literature explains in detail how various factors influence the effective professional socialization of teachers. Many important conclusions can be drawn based on detailed reading and analysis of the studies of different kinds: descriptive, experimental and exploratory, conducted in the area of teacher socialization.

The concept of teacher socialization is an intricate holistic process of becoming the member of teaching community acquiring the norms, practices, skills, knowledge, mastery of teaching profession and establishing the professional relationship with other members upward, downward and horizontal in organizational hierarchical structure (Jordell, 1987). It includes the organizational and cultural adjustment in teaching profession in general and particularly in the institution where the teachers get their jobs. Various studies conducted in the different cultural background all over the world have focused on the commonalities as well as the unique features of occupational enculturation and professional socialization (Geisler, 2017; Fadda, Afzaal & Haberman, 2020). Since the professional socialization is highly cultural issue, so it must be viewed in the perspective of the particular culture milieu where the study is conducted; for instance, the findings of the second language teacher education study conducted in non-English speaking countries should not be generalized for the English speaking countries (Tahir & Qadir, 2012a, Weiss & Bakhshi, 2015; Kanglong & Afzaal, 2020).

### Becoming a Teacher

The extensive study of literature reveals that the practicum and beginning teachers have been the point of great attention in teacher socialization as the initial years of professional career are considered the most significant in professional orientation and socialization of beginning teachers (Gratch, 2001; Haberman, Afzaal, Ghaffar, & Alfadda, 2020). In this period the beginning teachers confront with the real-life challenges which shockingly transform their perspectives from idealism to the realism of professional life. Many impediments blur their idealistic perspectives and thus they are socialized to the real-life situations. Their professional idealism demands to be reshaped according to the real-life professional practices when they find the restrains on their freedom, outmoded forms of syllabi, monetary rewards less than their expectations, few reasons for being motivated, duplicitous political organizational culture and

undirected and fruitless off-the-job professional trainings and workshops. Most of the time, teachers live their entire occupational life with the same professional self-image which they have developed in the early years of their job life (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006; Hind, Afzaal & Najla, 2020). Mostly studies on teacher socialization discovered the relationship among various workplace experiences which affect teacher professional growth including the learners' behavior and classroom ecology, opportunities for continuous professional learning, the supporting role of colleagues and headteachers and the organizational characteristics of school institution. The idea of successful professional socialization of beginning teachers was associated with their job satisfaction, continuous professional development, healthy relationship with senior colleagues and effective enculturation into the organizational environment (Roucaud, 2016).

### **Professional Socialization Content**

Mostly studies in the area of teacher socialization have focused on socialization content, one or more simultaneously. The effectiveness of professional socialization process can be accrued after discussing the socialization content individually and then evaluating their overall impact (Moreland, Levine & McMinn, 2001). Generally, the four main dimensions of professional content have been identified in many studies. These include *task mastery of teaching skill, professional learning events, relationship with senior colleagues, and organizational culture*. It has been found that the real-life classroom issues have direct influence on the teachers' self-image which leads them throughout their teaching career. Similarly, the senior colleagues and headteachers play a very significant role in providing the conducive working environment where the beginning teachers can express themselves openly and move into their career confidently. The continuous process of professional learning and the provision of supportive and facilitating organizational culture impact the professionalization process effectively and very positively (Tischenko-Osorno, 2012).

### **Teacher Professional Development in Pakistan**

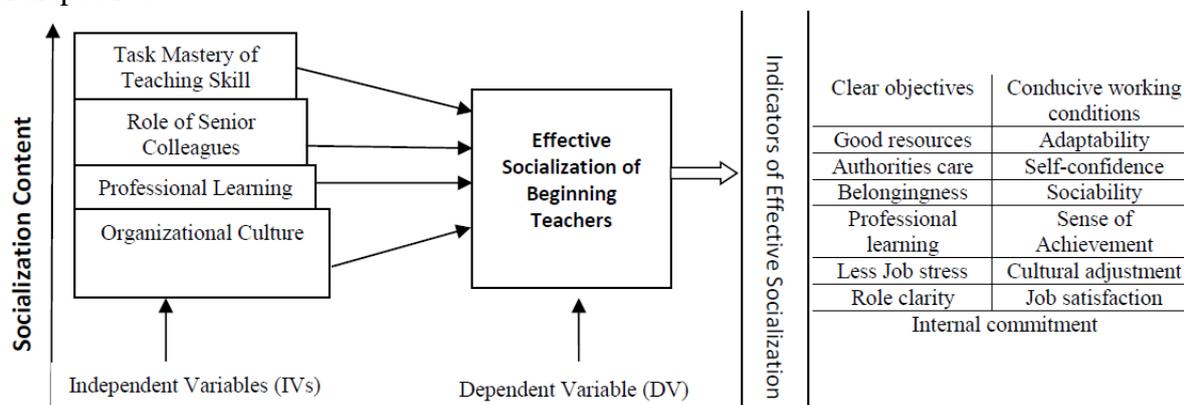
A large-scale professional development move can be seen in the local context both at public and private sector. The Higher Education Commission, Directorate of Staff Development, Higher Education Department, British Council Pakistan, AFAQ and many other organizations arrange a series of teacher professional development program, English teachers with the special focus, ranging from short term training workshop to long term professional development programs at various levels. However, these multiple and rapid reforms share the common focus on the off-the-job training of (beginning) teachers as the teachers are taken away to the remote place far away from real life classroom situations and then some academic knowledge-based information is shared with the ideal situations in mind. These teachers, after completing their training and receiving training allowances when return to the real-life workplace, a concrete world of challenges and opportunities is waiting for them for which they are never trained. The big gap between ideal and real life put them into mental conflicts which resultantly damages

their self-image and the teaching profession appears to them a common job which is meant only for their livelihood. These obsolete trainings have proved fruitless quite often for the teachers to face the workplace challenges in real-life scenario. Some significant studies conducted in the local academic context have highlighted the need to shift the emphasis from off-the-job training to workplace mentoring and organizational socialization of (beginning) teachers. The beginning teachers should be guided while teaching in their classes, sitting with their senior colleagues, dealing with their headteachers, managing students' activities, availing on-the-job professional learning opportunities and adjusting to the institutional culture (Sarwar, 2001; Siddiqui, 2002; Tahir & Qadir, 2012b, 2014; Warsi, 2004).

## METHODOLOGY

The study has followed the blended approach in collecting and analyzing the data. The Likert scaled questionnaire generated the quantitative data, which was then statistically analyzed, and the qualitative data collected through interviews validated these results later. This cross-sectional survey method remained successful in collecting the opinions of self-perceptions of beginning English teachers related to their initial adjustments to their profession and the institutions. The study was based on the theoretical framework that socialization contents directly influence the process of effective socialization which can be measured by effective socialization indicators. The Figure 1 illustrates this idea of effective socialization.

**Figure 1.** Research Model Showing Effective Teacher Socialization Process: Content Perspective



## Population and Sample

The study population consisted of those English teachers who had maximum five-year teaching experience of working as permanent or full-time teaching faculty in some Federal Board or Provincial Board affiliated college, both in public and private sectors. The sample from this population was drawn using the stratified random sampling method: gender, institution type, and nature of job. A sample of 150 beginning English teachers was chosen randomly and



carefully keeping in consideration the true representation of the population which was divided into various strata first as per gender, type of institution and the region.

### **Instrumentation**

A Likert format questionnaire was designed for collecting the data. Following all the considerations of validity and reliability, the questionnaire operationalized the study variables to collect the quantifiable data on valid measurement scales. The data collection tools of questionnaire comprised three main section and further four sub-sections. The demographic and personal information was included in *Section One*; The measurement scale for *Effective Socialization (ES)* as the criterion variable was included in *Section Two*, the measurement of socialization content was included in *Section Three* which was further divided into four sub-sections measuring the *task mastery of teaching skill (TMTS)*, *professional learning (PL)*, *relationship with senior colleagues (RSC)*, and *organizational culture (OC)*, as predicting variables. Following is the range of scale used for variable measurement:

| <b><u>Range</u></b> | <b><u>Interpretation</u></b>      |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4.01 _ 5.00         | Agree Strongly/ Very Pleasing     |
| 3.01 – 4.00         | Agree/ Pleasing                   |
| 2.01 – 3.00         | Undecided                         |
| 1.01 – 2.00         | Disagree/ Small Problem           |
| 0.00 – 1.00         | Disagree Strongly / Great Problem |

### **Piloting the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire, after developing, was presented to 20 selected participants of the study to check its validity; however, the results did not include their response. The suggestions from the respondents facilitated the process of designing the valid questionnaire which was improved accordingly. Similarly, for reliability check, the final questionnaire and results were entered into Cronbach's alpha which resulted as .89, approving the reliability statistics of the instrument as per required standards.

### **Interviewing**

The study in accordance with the practice of mixed methodology did not rely only on the questionnaire instrument which, according to Robson (2002), being self-completed by the participants, sometime require the ratification by some other means also. For this study, interviews from 20 selected participants who had already partook in the questionnaire survey were conducted to validate the results obtained by questionnaire instrument. For the purpose, semi-structured interviews were taken which proved more flexible and developed a better understanding of the process. Keeping all the study variables same, the interview questions were designed and then adapted as the interviews proceeded.

## Data Collection Procedure

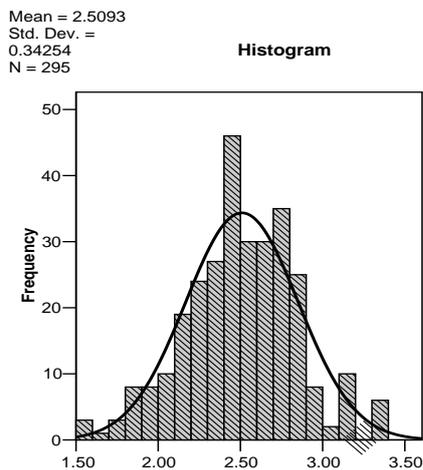
The selected institutions were visited, and questionnaire were presented to the participants, i.e., the beginning English teachers. It was very motivating for the researchers to see the return response of questionnaires, i.e., 81%. From a total of 150 questionnaire, 121 were returned; eight were rejected due to errors in them and finally 113 filled questionnaires were used for data analysis and preparing the results. The entire process of data collection took almost three months.

## RESULTS/ FINDINGS

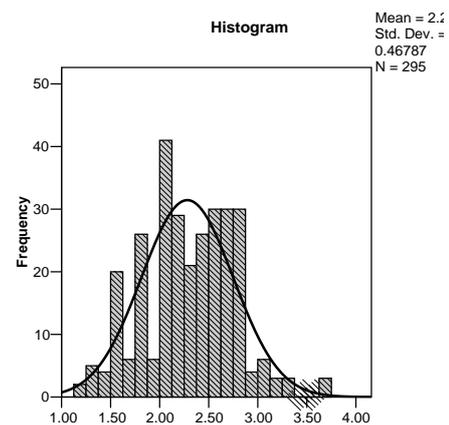
### Exploratory data analysis

The exploratory data analysis (EDA) was conducted after entering the data into SPSS. The exploration of data computed different statistics and prepared the graphs. Mainly, the EDA performed two functions including the plot generation and numbers generation. Following it, the parametric tests were conducted to the normality in the data. The descriptive statistics prepared the general features of the quantitative data collected through questionnaires. This descriptive analysis also provided a base for further inferential statistical analysis to find the relationship of variables. The analysis of data at both descriptive and inferential level were presented in tabular and graphic form.

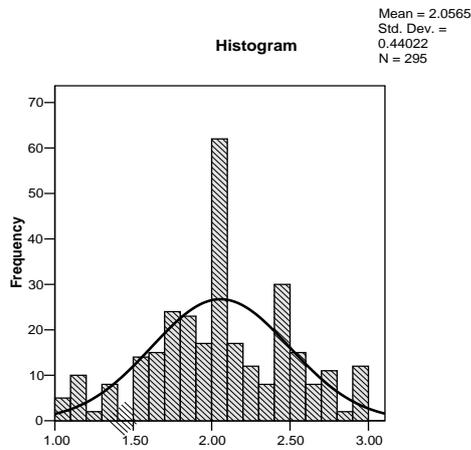
**Figure 2.** Descriptive Univariate analysis for ES



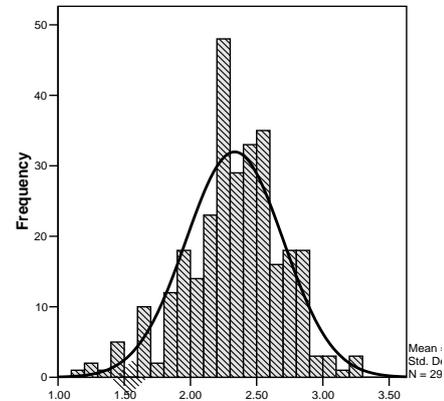
**Figure 3.** Descriptive Univariate Analysis for TMTS



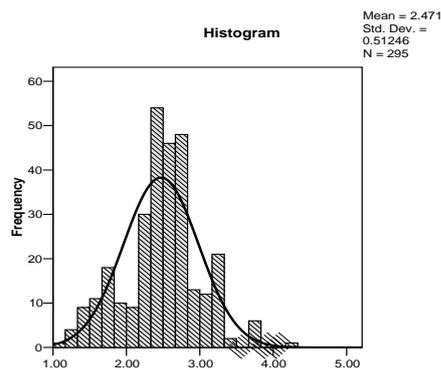
**Figure 4.** Descriptive Univariate Analysis for PL



**Figure 5.** Descriptive Univariate Analysis for RSC



**Figure 6.** Descriptive Univariate Analysis for OC



The basic assumption of normality was checked from the given data. Overall, the data appeared to be normally distributed, i.e., the skewness ranged between -1 and 1 and thus it was appropriate for further regression analysis (Figure 2,3,4,5,6). However, some items digressed marginally, but they were ignored on the assumption that the marginal variation would not affect the results calculated on the basis of composite variable under study.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of criterion and predicting variables

|      | Mean  | Std. Deviation | N    |
|------|-------|----------------|------|
| ES   | 2.509 | .3425          | =295 |
| TMTS | 2.282 | .4678          | =295 |
| PL   | 2.004 | .4028          | =295 |
| RSC  | 2.334 | .3681          | =295 |
| OC   | 2.471 | .5124          | =295 |

Table 2. *Multiple correlations: Beta coefficients*

|            | Standardized Coefficients | T     | Sig. |
|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|            | Beta                      |       |      |
| (Constant) |                           | 10.27 | .00  |
| TMTS       | .24                       | 4.53  | .00  |
| PL         | -.05                      | -1.06 | .28  |
| RSC        | .26                       | 4.44  | .00  |
| OC         | .37                       | 6.54  | .00  |

Table 3. *Model summary of multiple correlations*

| R   | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Predictors: (Constant), TMTS Dependent: ES</b> |          |                   |                            |
| .537(a)   | .288     | .286              | .28953                     |
| <b>Predictors: (Constant), PL Dependent: ES</b>   |          |                   |                            |
| .251(a)   | .063     | .060              | .33210                     |
| <b>Predictors: (Constant), RSC Dependent: ES</b>  |          |                   |                            |
| .629(a)   | .395     | .393              | .26679                     |
| <b>Predictors: (Constant), OC Dependent: ES</b>   |          |                   |                            |
| .654(a)   | .428     | .426              | .25951                     |

Table 4. *Multiple correlations: Beta coefficient*

| Beta Coefficients | Dependent Variable: ES   |       |      |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|------|
|                   | Standardized Coefficient | T     | Sig. |
|                   | Beta                     |       |      |
| (Constant)        |                          | 19.18 | .000 |
| Composite TMTS    | .53                      | 10.88 | .000 |
| (Constant)        |                          | 21.17 | .000 |
| PL                | .25                      | 4.44  | .000 |
| (Constant)        |                          | 11.45 | .000 |
| Composite RSC     | .62                      | 13.84 | .000 |
| (Constant)        |                          | 19.17 | .000 |
| OC                | .65                      | 14.80 | .000 |

The usual descriptive output is shown in the Table 1, indicating all five variables used in this study. The total number  $N$  is 295 which indicates that no case was excluded in the multiple regression and the missing cases were replaced with the composite means.

The Table 2 of correction presents a correlation matrix and here the first column presents the correlation of predicting variables with criterion variable. It is evident from the results that socialization content of *TMTS*, *PL*, *RSC* and *OC* were significantly correlated with *ES*. The results remained significant as no variable was found too highly correlated, i.e., beyond the

value of 0.7 with another and thus multicollinearity was not a problem in conducting the multiple regression test. It was maintained that the variables be measured together when they were computed for statistical analysis.

The Table 3 of model summary presents the correlation coefficient, the adjusted  $R^2$ , is .28, .06, .39, and .42 meaning that 28%, 6%, 39% and 42% of the variance in *ES* can be predicted from *TMTS*, *PL*, *RSC* and *OC*.

The Table 4 presents the standardized beta coefficient which was taken likewise the correlation coefficients and factor weights. In the table 4, it is shown that *TMTS*, *PL*, *RSC* and *OC* are significantly contributing to the prediction, as  $p = .000$  and  $\beta = .53, .25, .62, .65$  respectively.

## FINDINGS

### Significance

The results clearly indicate that the composite of the predicting variables including *TMTS*, *PL*, *RSC* and *OC* predict the *ES* significantly. The calculation of statistical significance was measured with the usual supposition when the probability goes below present alpha level, i.e., .05, the results are generally considered statistically significant. Another significant assumption is related with the results that suggest the *positive* direction of the influence indicating the same direction of movement of *effective socialization* (DV) and the other variables of socialization content (IVs), whether moving in negative way ( $\leftarrow$ ) or moving in positive way ( $\rightarrow$ ).

### Challenges to Professional Socialization

Overall, the results presented a positive picture of relationship between effective socialization and socialization content. All the contents of professional socialization (*TMTS*, *PL*, *RSC* and *OC*) were individually found in positive relationship with effective socialization. However, this study has found many challenges and problem in the effective professional socialization process of these beginning English teachers. The issues are the potential threat to the effective socialization and hence must be addressed in the perspective of alleviating self-efficacy of beginning English teachers regarding their professionalism. These challenges are associated with workplace professional learning in both formal and informal context, the experiences of beginning teachers with their senior colleagues while seeking advice and support, the incongruities of administrative staff and the headteachers, and enculturation to the organizational culture. The detailed findings related to the professional socialization challenges have been summarized as follows:

Table 5. *Summary of Findings related to challenges to effective professional socialization*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Challenges related to Task Mastery of Teaching Skills and Classroom Management</b> | Large classes<br>Curriculum and material preparation<br>Adroitness in the use of electronic technology<br>Maintaining classroom discipline<br>Learners' individual differences   |
| <b>Challenges related to Professional Learning</b>                                    | Unsuccessful role of academic conferences/ seminars<br>Lacking interest in qualification improving programs<br>Lacking trend for teacher network and association<br>Unavailability of official mentoring system<br>Lacking pre-service practicum |
| <b>Challenges related to the Role of Senior Colleagues</b>                            | Lack of strong association with senior colleagues<br>Lack of trust on principals and administrators<br>Lack of freedom of disagreement<br>Increasing concern for fulfillment of occupational needs   |
| <b>Challenges related to the Organizational Culture</b>                               | Fear of inequal treatment<br>Indistinct administrative policies and rules<br>Improvised level of self-efficacy<br>Less academic resources and facilities<br>Unproductive role of staffroom   |

The sample chosen for this study truly represented the self-perception of beginning English teachers about the effectiveness of their professional socialization and the nature and intensity of those problems which hinder the success of their professional socialization in teaching profession. It was also found that the data collection instrument of questionnaires proved valid and reliable and produced the desired data required for this study. It was found that mostly teachers joined the teaching profession before the age of 30, i.e., between the age group of 23 to 28 years. The biggest challenge appeared was that of beginning teachers' concern for their professional learning programs which they considered as the potential detriment to their successful professional career. The existing professional learning strategies based on off-the-job trainings were regarded as futile and outdated approaches which the beginning teachers must comply with owing to their job requirement. Likewise, female teachers complained more about the discriminatory practices, particularly, the women who were working in co-gender staff institutions. Another, big challenge appeared as a great threat was lack of trust of beginning teachers in Heads and Principals due to unaccepted and discriminatory behavioral practices alongside the dictatorial and bossy administrative style. That dictatorial style becomes a reason to the failure of availability of democratic culture encouraging freedom of expression. Unluckily, the beginning teachers think that the principals have failed to inspire them and be their role model. Job switching, particularly in the private sector institutions, was found as a more frequent phenomenon during the initial years of service. By and large, the initial years of teachers' life were found as a period of adjustment and settlement where the beginning teachers have to cope with many structural and personal challenges which ultimately determine the success or failure of professional socialization.

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## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and considering the problematic areas in professional socialization of beginning English teachers, the study has prepared the following suggestions, though an empirical study is still required to see their effectiveness in the real-life situation.

- Improving professional skills with the focus on workplace learning strategies both at formal and informal level.
- Introducing cost-effective professional development model/s which could be related to the teachers' professional self-image and their efficacy level.
- Increasing inter-personal relationship among teachers addressing the personal issues of beginning teachers to facilitate their smooth adjustment in teaching professional.
- Improving the role of administrators and principals to support a democratic environment to reduce the stress and enhance motivation level of teachers.
- Improving organizational culture where the beginning teachers feel prestige and comfort in their job environment.
- Improving teachers' self-perception through mentoring and counseling and giving voice and significance to their professional and personal problem.
- Improving effective role of staffroom which can be used as a great place of informal workplace socialization of beginning teachers.

## Conclusion

The results of the study proved a significant positive association of effective professional socialization with professional content of teaching skill, professional education, association with senior colleagues, and organizational environment. The study has also discovered many predictors of challenges to effective professional socialization of beginning English teachers in their newly joined teaching profession. These potential challenges give a better insight in understanding the professional socialization process and this realization can lead to better planning of teacher education program which need to be shifted from off-the-job training workshops to the workplace socialization and mentoring program both at formal and informal levels. Such workplace socialization programs must be associated with teachers' self-image, their real-life classroom management issues, job satisfaction, continuous professional learning approach and senior teachers' participation in mentoring program. The attitudinal and professional needs of the beginning teachers at workplace must be the focus of all professional socialization programs. As the teacher professional socialization is a complicated phenomenon, it requires thorough understanding of what the beginning teachers perceive of their professional self and which areas they consider to be improved and redefined. This study helps developing the workplace learning strategies for better enculturation of beginning teachers into teaching profession, keeping in view how well their personal and organization related problems can be addressed.

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