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Professional supports for overseas trained teachers in Australia

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This paper analyses evidence of overseas trained teachers' needs and the forms of support they receive from various channels. It has two aims. First, to better understand what overseas trained teachers need to progress their (new) teaching careers in the Australian education system. Second, to investigate what are sources of support the overseas trained teachers can access to meet their needs. The analysis of the evidence indicates that the forms of support occur along three main lines. The first concerns whether the overseas trained teachers do or can access enough authoritative information to navigate their way through the process of immigration, registration and employment. The second focuses on the kinds of professional support that overseas trained teachers can access from the State Education Departments, schools and colleagues to help them adjust to the new education system and its culture. This includes considerations of mentoring policies and the professional development of overseas trained teachers. Third, there are the support networks that the overseas trained teachers access via their peers especially those in and from homeland. These support networks provide access to accumulated knowledge and intellectual resources inside and outside of Australia which brings benefits to Australian education. This analysis of the evidence provides a basis for judging the adequacy of the forms of support available to overseas trained teachers to go through various barriers and help convert them into the teachers needed meet the needs of Australian education. Policy documents and interviews provide the evidentiary basis for this paper. The Bourdieu's concept of social networks is used to discuss how the social capital helps the overseas trained teachers overcome these barriers.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses evidence of OTTs' needs and the forms of support they receive from various channels. It has two aims. First, to better understand what OTTs need in order to progress or to renew their teaching careers in the Australian education system. Second, to investigate what are the sources of support the OTTs can access to meet their needs. The analysis of evidence reveals that the forms of support occur along four main lines. The first is authoritative information to navigate their way through the processes of immigration, registration and employment. The second focuses on professional support that OTTs can access from the NSW DET, schools and colleagues, to help them learn about the new education system and its culture. This includes considerations of mentoring policies and the professional development of OTTs. Third, there are the support networks that the OTTs access via their peers, especially those in and from the homeland. These support networks provide access to the accumulated knowledge and intellectual resources inside and outside of Australia which bring benefits to Australian education. The fourth provides evidence of the self-adjustments the OTTs make to help themselves adjust to teaching methods and qualifications in the Australian education context. This paper analyses evidence of the adequacy of forms of support that help the OTTs to progress through various barriers and help convert themselves to meet the needs of Australian education. This paper starts by providing an analysis of the evidence of the overseas trained teachers' needs, according to a NSW Teachers Federation (2003) report.

2. OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS' NEEDS

There are problems in providing appropriate support for overseas trained teachers. The NSW Teachers Federation (2003b) argues that there four issues which have to be addressed to assist OTTs in adjusting to the NSW public school system, and which require more attention from the NSW DET:

1. the need to support schools which are currently struggling to provide appropriate support for some overseas trained teachers who are currently working in our schools;
2. the need for a serious and systemic strategy to support teacher induction generally;
3. the need for there to be support for the school and the teachers involved in the suitability assessment program; and
4. the need for any such proposal to be accessible to all applicants who seek it and therefore remain fee free (p. 2).

Here the NSW Teachers Federation identifies its worries about OTTs as well as NSW public schools. The lack of appropriate professional support designed to improve teacher capabilities posed challenges for both, leading the:

Federation [to] lobby to ensure that teachers recruited from overseas have appropriate qualifications and an adequate induction program that includes an internship. This will prevent negative impacts on students, staff and the person appointed (NSW Teachers Federation, 2003a, p. 1).

Not only have OTTs had difficulties in fitting into their new work environment, but also schools are aware of the importance of employing OTTs. As the authority with the responsibility for public schools and OTTs, the NSW DET designs and conducts programs for both OTTs and the schools in which they are to work. In terms of gaining general support, 78.79% (n=104) of 132 OTTs surveyed in this research indicated that this support was adequate (see Figure 1).

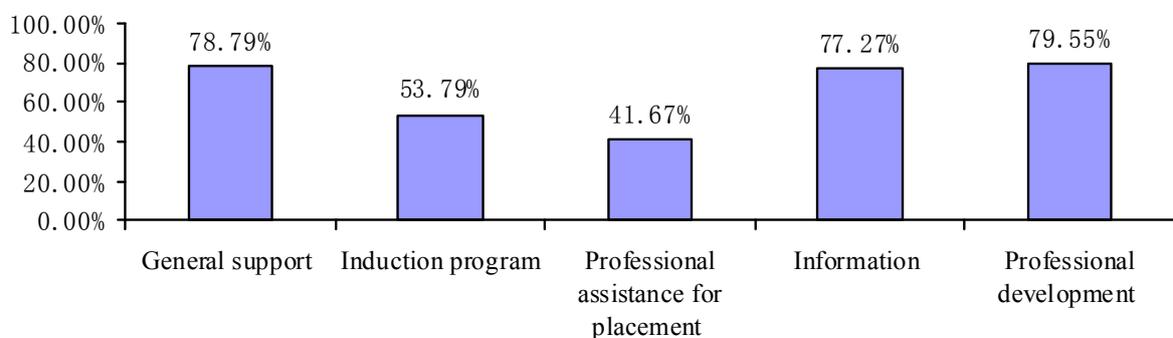


Figure 1
Satisfaction rate for various forms of support for the OTTs

In terms of induction programs, 53.79% (n=71) of the 132 NSW survey participants said that the assistance was adequate. The survey data also indicated that professional assistance for OTTs with placements was adequate (41.67%, n=55) and 79.55% (n=105) said that they receive adequate support for their professional learning. Moreover, support via information service was also seen as adequate (77.27%, n=102) by 132 OTTs surveyed in NSW. From Figure 1, it can be seen that the survey respondents were generally satisfied with support for their professional learning, with information as well as general matters. However, the survey respondents were not very satisfied with the support connected to employment and the PeP.

Given difficulties that the particular OTTs in this study faced in the NSW education system, another survey question helps us to better understand how the OTTs solved these difficulties. There were 107 OTTs out of 132 surveyees who provided their responses to this question (see Figure 2).

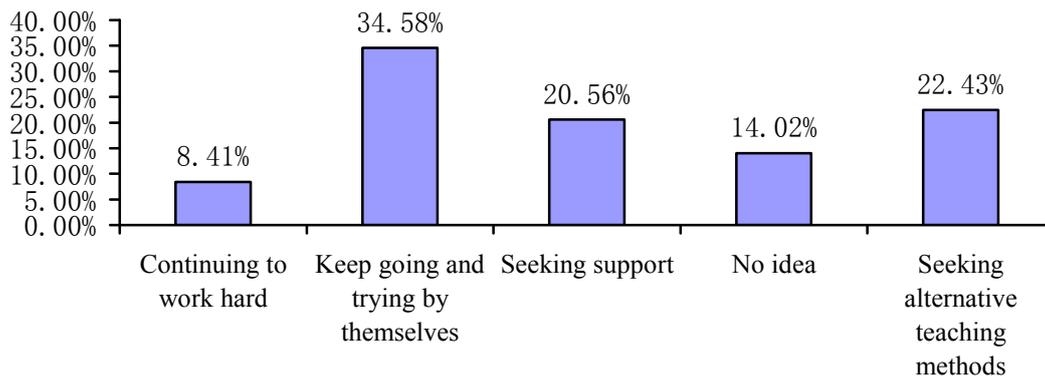


Figure 2
How the OTTs solve difficulties

Figure 2 shows that when facing difficulties, 14.02% (n=15) did not have ideas on how to solve the problems. 20.56% (n=22) would seek support from others, including

colleagues, families and friends. Combining the other three approaches, namely ‘continuing to work hard’, ‘keep going and trying’ and ‘seeking alternative teaching methods’, we find that more than half of the OTTs (65.42%, n=70 out of 107 survey respondents) sought solutions to their difficulties by themselves. For newly arrived OTTs, solving difficulties by themselves might not be a wise choice, as they might be stuck on some problems for a long time. This raises concerns about discussing what sorts of support may help the OTTs deal more efficiently with the difficulties. The next four sections analyse information support, professional support, peer support networks and self-adjustment of the OTTs using interview evidence.

3. INFORMATION SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS

Labour market and related information is very important for a worker who is a stranger in a new place. Tourists learn about attractions and glean directions to how to reach them, through brochures. Online tourist information and forums provide suggestions and recommendations to enable tourists to find the most appropriate and efficient route to explore scenic views. For immigrant workers with sufficient information, they too can easily accommodate themselves in a new country with few troubles. However, lack of specific, detailed labour market information will lead to wasting time on useless matters. In this section, some of the interviewees expressed their difficulties in understanding labour market information relating to immigration, teacher registration and employment policies in NSW.

Before migrating to Australia, Anna collected information about living and working in Australia. She realised that she had to register as an OTT with the NSW DET and that an approval number was needed before she could begin looking for a teaching position. Therefore, she prepared her certificates of teaching and degrees, ready to prove that she was a qualified and experienced OTT who could be registered to teach in NSW:

Well when I got here I was just on the Internet a lot. I thought right, I'm going to find out. So I did everything via the Internet. I found out you have to order this pack. They send you this pack with information and you do part of it online and part of it by sending things off. All sorts of different bibs and bobs. Most of it I found out from online. So theoretically I should have done that and waited for the pack to be sent over to me. Now I am thinking about it, I really should have done that. But I did not realise that it would have taken quite as long as it did. So anyone that I speak to now that is thinking of coming over, I tell them all to do it first (Anna, 19 August 2008).

The Internet is important for OTTs to check registration policies before and after arriving in Australia. Anna learned from the Internet that the NSW DET would provide an information pack to guide OTTs through the registration process. The information pack indicated that OTTs who wanted to teach in NSW had to register online while also sending off, via the post, the paper work required for recognition of qualifications. Anna waited for the information pack at home so as to avoid unnecessary detours in the registration process. However, she suggested that OTTs preparing to come to Australia should complete the registration process before leaving their homeland, to avoid unexpected trouble and time delays.

Anna felt helpless when she was asked to register online about her preferred work locations, employment status and time. As an OTT, she was in a new, strange country and unsure about many of these matters. There was not enough information to help her know what kinds of districts, schools and work options might suit her needs:

Most of the information I got from speaking to people about why they would need all of that rather than getting it from the website. I'm sure if you mine your way through all the different pages carefully then it would've been in some small print somewhere. But I didn't come across it (Anna, 19 August 2008).

Interpretation of information is necessary to understanding it. Anna asked other OTTs or Australian friends for explanations. The information on the NSW DET website required more knowledge and interpretative skills than Anna had, to fully understand.

Paul came to Australia with a skilled worker's visa that meant his qualification had been assessed and passed by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR):

They assessed both my teaching qualification and my IT qualification. They wrote back and said my qualifications are applicable in Australia, I am good to teach. However, what I did not realise at the time was that there was an additional layer of State assessment. You may have heard this before (Paul, 6 June 2008).

Passing the national skills assessment does not mean an OTT is qualified to teach at the State level. The double layers of government and the lack of specific explanations about the different registration and employment processes at the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the NSW DET can be a shock. This jeopardised Paul's employment as a teacher in Australia.

Anita did not successfully pass the NSW qualification recognition process to become primary teacher, even though she had two Masters degrees in primary education. In order to work as a teacher in an early childhood centre school, Anita took part in a teaching course and gained a certificate. However, Anita still had difficulties in finding proper teaching jobs. Anita considered that there was not enough authoritative employment information to support and answer her needs:

I am in a black hole basically. I have tried a few places but I cannot get. That is why the reason I survive from this one [current work]. I make that a chance to speak with someone so that I can get introduction with someone in the child development department or somewhere. Basically what I want now is to enrol in a university for childcare (Anita, 10 August 2008).

Anita's Australian childcare certificate did not let her get a relatively stable teaching position but only a job as a childcare assistant. She described her employment-seeking process as a 'black hole'. Anita has spent much money doing

various training programs to gain a childcare certificate but this did not help her much in securing employment as a teacher. She had to collect information from various channels, but no one could provide her an authoritative answer until she learnt from the childcare department that a university teaching degree in early childhood might help her to become a childcare teacher. To help Anita to find an appropriate university that could provide early childhood education degree and thus a path to better employment, I sent her relevant information.

Some OTTs find difficulty in obtaining adequate information with regard to their registration and employment. Therefore, it seems desirable for NSW education authorities to advertise their information, policies and regulations through various channels that the OTTs can access. The Internet is an efficient channel as information can be quickly updated and provide timely access. The researcher has observed that since 2006 the NSW DET website, as the most authoritative source of information about that education system, has improved the information it provides compared to when this research started. The next section discusses potential professional support for the OTTs.

4. PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS

The PEAT preparation course and the Pre-employment Program can be taken as forms of professional support that the NSW DET provides to OTTs. However, some of the OTTs found that because they were treated as experienced teachers in schools, they could not gain enough professional support for their adjustment to local schools.

Vanessa has a sister who is an Australian-trained education graduate. She believes that there are no significant differences between the treatment of Australian-trained teachers and OTTs with respect to the NSW teachers' registration and employment process. Vanessa ascertained this after comparing her story with her sister's. However, she found one very important difference. The professional support the

Australian-trained teachers receive seems to be greater:

When I looked at all of the [education systems] whether you are in the Catholic system or the public system, I just found that I did not get any mentoring or any kind of input from the Catholics for doing it. My sister was doing it with the DET at the same time. Being a 'targeted graduate' she was given a lot of formal time to get on with it. She was sent on various things to do it. Other first year teachers in my school were given all those opportunities but they didn't see. Because I was also part-time they didn't include me in that whole process. So, at the end of the year I was no further in doing it because no one had helped. I just didn't have the mentoring (Vanessa, 13 July 2008).

Given the uncertainty and debates surrounding key concepts, Peeler and Jane (2005, p. 326) define mentorship as 'the "ongoing supportive relationship" that may develop in both informal and formal arrangements'. Different education systems provide different form of professional support for OTTs working in casual positions. Vanessa had not received any kind of mentorship to help her solve problems and difficulties. However, on the other hand, her Australian-trained sister, who was a 'beginning teacher' (Singh, 2007) had access to various professional services to help her deal with a range of problems in her teaching. Vanessa's part-time employment status worked against her getting the same support as her sister. She felt disappointed because no one was helping her:

So it assumes you have come into teaching to be a classroom teacher at the very beginning rather than assuming that you might come in from overseas or interstate and have 20 years experience teaching, when you are actually going into a non-classroom role, but still playing a role as a teacher, as an educator (Vanessa, 13 July 2008).

One reason some OTTs may not receive professional support is that it is assumed they have enough classroom teaching experience, and so they are not able to access the mentoring provided to beginning teachers. However, Vanessa was classified as a new teacher because she came from overseas. Moreover, she knew very little about the NSW teaching environment, even though she did the PeP and had many years of

overseas teaching experience. On the one hand, NSW DET asks for OTTs to start over in Australia to gain local teaching experience, and on the other hand, it is supposed that OTTs can deal with teaching problems by themselves using their previous overseas work experience without any formal mentoring. How OTTs can take advantages of their teaching experience while also being supported as teachers needing to adjust to the local teaching context, is a challenge. Vanessa was very satisfied with her current school as it was: ‘very good at seeing me as an expert in my field, acknowledging me and my experience, giving me freedom’ (Vanessa, 13 July 2008). Investigating and knowing the advantages OTTs bring is very important for both local schools and the overseas teachers themselves.

A different kind of response to professional support was provided by Alka, who was from Fiji and had received an English language education from primary school. She was employed in various teaching and administrative positions in Fiji, passed PEAT in one attempt, and gained a permanent teaching position in a short time. Alka is an OTT with enough competence to deal with the difficulties in her teaching and daily life. Alka was satisfied with the support she received from her principal and colleagues, and was confident in dealing with various difficulties. She commented positively on her professional support:

The support that I have been given at the school here, the school as a whole, and the principal, you would not believe it since 2001. If my own children are sick, when they can they let me go home early. I have got that kind of support, from my first one year. All these things, they mean so much to me. They know you do not have any family here. My head teacher, always made me feel like I am good, like I can do it. Now there are days where students in her class are causing trouble, she sends them to me. When I am free, if I can I keep them (Alka, 2 July 2008).

Professional support from the school builds a teacher’s contentment. For Alka it was more than she had expected; so much of it was unexpected. The Principal and her colleagues were so supportive when Alka was a newly arrived OTT in the school.

This support meant she could take care of her family and work through the challenges of the early migrant settlement stage. The professional support provided her with Australian teaching skills, but more importantly, encouraged her to feel that she can do things equally as well as Australian-trained teachers. This professional support was necessary, and it greatly inspired Alka to be confident, and enhanced her professional learning, and became a form of mutual support among her colleagues and herself. Alka expressed the view that:

They [overseas trained teachers] are the people who complain that we need support. I will get support when I need support. Because you are [teachers], it is your responsibility as a teacher. You should be able to do what your responsibility calls for (Alka, 2 July 2008).

OTTs do not just wait for professional support but work to improve their own teaching competences and to get used to the new education system and community. The professional support of an outside assistant tool cannot resolve all the difficulties, especially if teachers refuse to develop themselves inside. Alka considered it was unfair to other teachers if OTTs claimed that they should have easier classes to teach in the first two years of teaching in Australia:

Because all the teachers do get difficulties. That frustration that I go through with some students, the other teachers in my faculty they have their frustrations, not just us. So they deal with the same issues. So it is unfair to say you get easier classes. Like it is the same as you go working in somewhere and you just want the light duty. Some people who are good masters, very well educated but they are not for in this system. They work in a factory (Alka, 2 July 2008).

Many of the difficulties facing OTTs and Australian-trained teachers are similar. Both have different difficulties in some areas, but some difficulties are less for the local teachers. Therefore OTTs, as teachers first, have to deal with these problems to show that they are capable to teach in Australia. The lack of local teaching experience could not be an excuse to claim an easier job. OTTs have to earn respect through hard work

and teaching competence. Alka considered that it was not practical for OTTs to expect employers to accommodate them. On the contrary, OTTs should take the initiative to get used to the environment where they are now working. Professional support should be established on the basis of what the OTTs need, not what they want.

Medlyn had never worked in the NSW public school system. She had a different view on professional support:

Support is a big one from [OTTs' perspective]. I do not know where you get the support from but just to know that there is support, that there will be, you know. You are not going to have parents or students who are giving you a headache. Besides the work load that you have during the day. So I think that is a big one. I do not know how else to attract people (Medlyn, 18 August 2008).

Professional support is very important for OTTs, and needs to be provided in various forms. It might involve mentors, where teachers sit together at a certain time to discuss matters of concern. It could take the form of incoming OTTs having backup, a person ready to help when they are facing difficulties. With regard to the amount of professional support, Medlyn said:

It just depends on the school you are at. The first school that I went to, they knew I was a new teacher and there was a lot of help offered. I had a really good co-ordinator so I felt that if there was any help I needed it was there for me in NSW. I think now that I have been teaching for a couple of years I do not kind of think the same support is necessary. I guess if I wanted it I would ask for it (Medlyn, 18 August 2008).

It might be assumed that schools the OTTs work in provide the requisite professional support. Medlyn's first school provided enough support to help her get used to its educational environment. The mentors took her as a new teacher and offered much help in order to meet her teaching needs. This support assisted Medlyn to become a successful teacher with the confidence to deal with various difficulties after she moved to Western Australia. Thus, this professional support not only met this OTTs'

initial needs but also benefited her teaching career. The needs of OTTs were raised by various interviewees. For instance, Anita gave up during the school practicum because her supervisor did not take responsibility for helping her prepare the lessons, made her feel uncomfortable and was discouraging:

she was supposed to help me in making the [lessons], because I did not know the system here, like how do we teach, how do we make the things and so. But she said it is not the right kind of job for me, she said I cannot teach high school students she was very rude to me, so I gave up (Anita, 10 August 2008).

The supervisor of OTTs' school practicums are supposed to help them to learn about the NSW schooling system and teaching strategies through real teaching practices, and to see whether they could adjust to their new teaching environment. Both the OTTs and the supervisors know that the former have much to learn about this new education system. Therefore, supportive supervisors can help OTTs to become familiar with the system, and also enhance their confidence in engaging the system.

Chinmayi failed her school practicum as she was unable to control the students, although her supervisor agreed that she had knowledge that could contribute to NSW school students. Chinmayi did not know what to do to manage the students' behaviours. Her experience in Sri Lanka was that students would sit quietly and listen to teachers carefully in classes. She was not aware that student behaviour management would take such a large proportion of time in Australian classes:

They [the school and the Principal] did not give me a chance. When they say, if you are not successful at your school practical assessment, they say they are [not going to employ me]. There is another bridging course, but I did not refer to that (Chinmayi, 25 June 2008).

The school and its Principal did not give Chinmayi a second chance to do the practicum after she failed the first time. Therefore, Chinmayi could not register with the NSW DET, as she had not completed the PeP. Sophie used to work with NSW

DET and the ACT Education Department. She understood the importance of professional support for OTTs:

I had a helpful person within NSW who invited me along to the professional development that was going on for learner assistance teachers. That was useful because that brought me up to speed with things like how they do assessment here and that type of thing. This was very useful (Sophie, 12 August 2008).

Good professional assistance as a great help for OTTs, enabling them to get used to the work environment in a short time. Sophie learnt how to assess Australian students from a professional mentor in her school. Compared with Anita and Chinmayi's unsuccessful and depressing experiences, Rebecca's story shows the bright side of professional support. Of course, as an OTT, her path was not smooth, but it shows how an OTT can survive in the Australian education context with appropriate and adequate professional support. The PeP course helped Rebecca after first finishing the registration process.

Once I got down there [Blacktown] and actually did the courses there. It was very good. I actually told him [a DET officer] that it gave me an overview of what the curriculum was about. It then gave me an idea of what Australian teaching would be about. It pointed me in the right direction. ... Then, of course, I had to do the 2 weeks in a school. That was my first real introduction with working with Australian children. Then obviously once I was approved to start teaching, I had my first casual day (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

The induction program was very helpful for giving OTTs a preliminary sense of what Australian school education and curriculum are like. The school practicum provided Rebecca a chance to meet and work with Australian school children as well as learning school routines. Rebecca then gained a teaching position in a school after getting her official 'teaching approval'. However, the shock of awful student behaviour almost sent her home:

I had one of them at a high school, where my first experience was actually with a class. I had never experienced that in my life before. That was the class that walked out on me. Then I went off to another school. I had another day, which was also with a child that literally crawled up the walls. They were suppose to have withdrawn that child from the class because they do not normally expose that child to the casual teacher. I actually got home and I said to my husband, 'That's it! I am not staying in Australia. I am going home. Put me on the plane right now or you are divorced'. I went home (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

OTTs can be expected to have difficulties in dealing with inappropriate student behaviours, due to inexperience in having to deal with this in their prior teaching. There is professional support, and there are strategies to assist them to get used to the realities of the Australian teaching environment. Rebecca then compared differences in the professional support she received from her current school with that of her previous school, where she worked as a casual teacher:

I was with a very good teacher. He was [one of the] Assistant Principals. Obviously when you are co-teaching with someone who is a very good practitioner, you pick up different sorts of odds and ends I did. It went exceptionally well. I had no problem with that at all. I have felt very comfortable at my school. They have been very supportive. The staffs here are wonderful. My casual days were in schools where I actually knew nobody (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

A cooperative and mutually supportive teaching environment is of benefit to OTTs. Rebecca's overseas teaching experiences were valued by her colleagues. Her mentor was willing to help her to solve different problems in the school. This collegial support inspired Rebecca to be confident in her teaching in Australia and helped her to better understand the nature and value of the professional support that OTTs can depend on, and the support they can provide each other:

there are other teachers at the school but you know something it actually gets to a point as well, they also have their own problems. They also have a lot that they have got on their plate. They actually do not have the time to sit around and support people (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

Rebecca expected DET to provide professional support to help the OTTs get used to the NSW schooling system. However, she also recognised that the local Australian teachers have their own problems and so cannot help all the time. The pressures of work are such that ‘to keep pace leaves little time for longer serving staff to inform newcomers of educational histories and the continuing trajectories of change’ (Peeler & Jane, 2005, p. 329). Therefore, support for OTTs helping each other to find solutions to their problems might be useful, along with the professional support of mentors.

How much professional support would be adequate to help the OTTs to get used to the NSW education system? Rose, a former senior teacher and school administrator said:

I am not saying it had to take 6 months or even a year, you know. It just needed to be a bit more interaction over a period of time. Instead of all I got was that 3 days, then into school, back for my interview and then I was done. I left. There’s no follow up. No, ‘How are you getting on?’ No real interest in terms of getting you employed and so on so forth (Rose, 19 August 2008).

The PeP did not provide enough time for the OTTs to learn about the NSW education system. The school practicum lasted only for two weeks. Follow-up professional support could be an efficient way of focusing on the workplace needs of OTTs. Karen held a similar view to Rose on the value of the professional support:

The whole system is very good. I have to show initiative myself. I have to decide what it is that. If I need help I go and look for it and find it. That’s an important skill about being a teacher as well, not just relying on other people to do it for you (Karen, 16 June 2008).

The mentorship system is very useful. However, it is also important for OTTs to find answers for themselves. One of the basic skills of a teacher is to have the

independence and competence to solve the difficulties of teaching. The initial professional support of the PeP was not designed to address their every need. Further, professional support was needed then in areas where the OTTs most needed it. Karen described the professional support as being like helping with ‘children in your class that are having difficulty’ (Karen, 16 June 2008). The teachers point out the right directions for the children to find the answers, but do not work out the problems for the children:

So the schools where I have worked, they have had very good systems in place in terms of inductions, mentors and approaches to professional learning. These allowed the school to respond to the needs of the school as a whole as well as the needs of individuals (Karen, 16 June 2008).

School may provide point-to-point support which meets OTTs’ needs. The PeP was helpful in letting OTTs know about general school discipline and regulations, but follow-up professional support may also be necessary to match individual OTTs’ needs. Besides information support and on-going support for the OTTs, another form of support for OTTs—peer support networks—which are discussed in the next section may raise attention for the stakeholders.

5. OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS’ PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

For some OTTs, coming from different cultural and educational contexts, their needs for information and professional support cannot be fully met by NSW DET officials. Some of the OTTs find other source of support to help them get used to the system. These are support networks made up of OTTs. Some of the OTTs find it difficult to communicate with their Australian colleagues, as their issues and concerns are not the same. The OTTs always have to explain something about their former educational activities, while trying to learn more about Australia’s educational culture. Communicating with Australian colleagues can lead to blank moments. Given this situation, some OTTs mentioned that their friends’ advice in their home countries is

particularly useful, as they do not have to spend as much time explaining things that can be taken for granted. This makes the conversation more understandable and easier. Anna, who benefited from her colleague's support in this way, said:

One of the main people I speak to on these issues is one of my old teaching friends who is the ICT co-ordinator at the school I used to work at in the UK. We used to do a lot with all the new ICT. We had the interactive white boards for a couple of years before I came out here. She was very good at getting in to all the new things. Because I was the youngest member of staff there, I would be very keen to try everything out with her. So it is another one of those things we are trying out really, just not in the same work setting I suppose (Anna, 19 August 2008).

The OTTs' support network can be composed either of their friends or colleagues in Australia or it can draw on colleagues in their home countries. Anna developed her ICT teaching skills here in Australia through communicating with one of her colleagues in the UK by phone or other ICT tools. She discussed advanced ICT skills with her colleague and brought these skills to her Australian work environment. Anna found it tough to communicate with her Australian colleagues concerning certain cultural and educational issues. Rebecca was very lucky to have a sister in Australia who could help her better understand Australian education, curriculum and materials:

She has been a great help in terms of policy documents, pointing me in the right direction of reading whatever had to be done. From a government point of view, the first thing that obviously happened was we had that overseas trained teacher's course that I had to do prior to actually going (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

Rebecca's sister helped her to fill in the gap between what she understood about the registration and employment policies of OTTs and Australian interpretations of these policies. OTTs are likely to misunderstand the contextually grounded meanings of such policies, as they are not familiar with the Australian educational culture. It was necessary for someone to explain the policies in terms of local experiences and interpretations. With her family support network, Rebecca was well advised on how to

navigate and thus to avoid unnecessary detours in the labour registration process.

Besides getting support from friends in their home countries and family members in Australia, OTTs who did not have such sources of support, organised cooperative networks among OTTs to assist each through their difficulties. The interview evidence shows that several OTTs from different backgrounds had such networks, which played an important role in providing support, information and a safe environment for sharing their experiences of teaching in Australia. Alka said that some Fijian teachers, who came to Australia seven years before her and who had permanent teaching positions, helped her to understand what it means to be a teacher in Australia:

You cannot practise what you practise in your country. You would not see it, because students do not want to be... they try your authority in a friendly manner. I am in control. You need to do the [right things]. It just does not come like that. It comes with experience (Alka, 2 July 2008).

The adequacy of overseas teaching experience gives some OTTs an advantage. However, thinking that one's overseas teaching experience is all that is needed to teach in Australia is wrong, and leads to inefficiency. In Fiji, teachers may not be worried about classroom control, as the teachers there have full authority. Initially Alka tried to adopt her Fijian practices in an Australian class, but these failed. She quickly learnt how to use different but other effective ways to deal with misbehaving Australian students from her Fijian teacher support network. She pointed out that the classroom control methods they taught her were not related to their Fijian experiences but to their Australian teaching experiences.

Alka's colleagues also provided her with suggestions about student behaviour management, but it came from their Australian experiences, while also knowing what it is like in an overseas country. The evidence shows that the OTTs need such collegial circles or networks to provide professional support from experienced migrant teachers from similar educational cultures. Judy developed a teacher network

when she was a teacher in an American school in Sydney. She kept the network of teachers even after the school closed. She described her group as a support network where the teachers could share their positive or negative experiences of Australian education:

Our group has currently expanded from an American group to just a migrant group. We've got people from the UK, from Ireland. We have got some people that are currently moved here from Bangladesh. We get together. It is like a migrant group trying to support each other in the midst of a culture that is not very welcoming to migrants (Judy, 17 August 2008).

Judy proudly said that her network was not a group which was only composed of teachers from the United States but included other OTTs from all over the world. She implied that Australia's education culture did not favour migrants, an issue discussed with her group members. Judy's support circle provides an opportunity for OTTs to share their Australian experiences. It shows the OTTs' cooperative spirit in a situation where there is a shortage of labour market information and professional support. While different from the NSW DET's OTT support procedures, their multi-ethnic support group is vibrant and helpful for the OTTs. Peeler and Jane (2005, p. 327) indicate that the 'mentoring process is enhanced by informal rather than formal mentoring arrangements'.

The above three sections have discussed forms of support that might be provided to help OTTs to engage the NSW education system more comfortably. These forms of support range from providing exact registration and employment information to the OTTs through various channels, to providing on-going professional support to establish peer support networks. It is hard to decide which forms of support would be the most appropriate and efficient for OTTs. Further, it would be arbitrary to say which form of support is inefficient, due to the different contexts where the OTTs live and work. The contexts may cause individualised responses from the interviewees. When facing problems, the OTTs can either choose to seek help from people around

them or solve the problems by themselves. The next section will discuss how the OTTs adjust their teaching methods and qualifications to fit into the NSW education system.

6. MAKING SELF-ADJUSTMENTS TO TEACHING METHODS AND QUALIFICATIONS

There are gaps between the OTTs' expectations and the practical situations in which they find themselves. Either the OTTs choose to remain what they are or take the initiative to negotiate their way into the current environment. This section focuses on analysing evidence of the differences between the OTTs' experiences within and outside of Australia, and how they deal with the Australian students by adjusting to Australian teaching methods. This raises the question of whether multicultural education means that OTTs stick to their original teaching methods in order to show their individual colour on a mosaic wall. Alternatively, do the OTTs from various countries better serve the system by drawing on their overseas experiences, which most Australian teachers do not have.

6.1 Adjusting teaching methods

This section discusses OTTs' capabilities for critical self-reflection as a professional support mechanism to get involved in the Australian education system. Vallika, an Indian teacher who came to Australia more than ten years ago, successfully gained a permanent teaching position. She claimed that OTTs need to be aware that they are now in a multicultural education context. The OTTs have to make some adjustments to get used to the local education culture in order to be more acceptable to Australian students:

You feel the different culture, and adjust to the different culture. I've seen someone in this school here from a migrant background take a class and

the tone that the person spoke: “get into 2 lines. You go and sit here”. You know a softer tone was needed. The students who will not cope [with the tougher tone]. They [the students] lost respect [for the teacher] as soon as they think you can’t deal with it (Vallika, 12 March 2008).

Vallika said that OTTs had to realise they were in a different education culture with different educational values. It was hard for OTTs to be accepted by students and their colleagues if they refused to change to fit into the Australian social and educational context. Alka thought her background made her difficulties of transition easier in a multicultural family in Fiji, she explained it as:

I may have a student who is good and then misbehaves in one lesson. Why? What is that? So I try and find out their background because it helps you to understand more. If you teach, you do take on responsibilities. When my head teacher was not here from end 2003 and whole of 2004 I was the head teacher. So it’s all that exposure too it gives you more confidence (Alka, 2 July 2008).

Alka’s family is not a traditional immigrant family. Her mother is a Hindu while her father was a Christian. So Alka had experience of both these cultures, and she could understand the conflict between both, and also their positive elements. She and other family members shared similar feelings:

In Fiji, you have a classroom control. The work is there, whatever you prepare. Of course you will have 100% of students listening to you. You don’t have to worry about the students do whatever you want to do ... they are seated and pay attention. ... You can’t practice here what you practice in your country. You wouldn’t see it, because students don’t want to be... try authority in a friendly manner. It just doesn’t come like that; it comes with experience (Alka, 2 July 2008).

Alka use to teach in circumstances where she could fully control her class. She built her authority as a teacher in the classroom and this made her more confident as a teacher. But here in Australia, she found that she had less control in the classroom. She had ability in and experience of controlling a class, and did so with ease. But the

different teaching environment in Australia made it hard for her to apply this experiential knowledge in this new education environment. Another teacher, from India, Anita, felt the same as Alka and had similar Australian classroom experiences in Australian classrooms:

Of course they were big because it was Year 10. They were big. They were not good. I did not have experience with these types of children. In India the children are not of this kind. They listen to the teacher. They respect the teacher very much. They [Australian students] were throwing papers, chairs here and there. It was so rude. I did not like it (Anita, 10 August 2008).

Anita failed at the school practicum stage in her teaching assessment as she could not get used to the Australian students' behaviours, which were totally different from those of students in India. Anita found that Australian students were not likely to follow the teachers' instructions and showed less respect than Indian students. Anita was disappointed with the rude behaviour of Australian students and found no solution to deal with these difficulties. Comparing Australian and other education contexts, Veronika, who was trained in both Russia and Australia and taught in Australia for many years said:

For the last 16 years, Russia has had some changes so I do not know anything about Russian educational system right now. But prior to that, it was slight difference in terms of discipline. There were lots of expectations from the students. The role of the teacher was just an idol, compared to Australia. The relationship between student and teacher is more like a partnership and friendship (Veronika).

Veronika is not up to date with the current Russian educational context as she left that country sixteen years ago. However, from her previous experience, she said Russian education paid more attention to discipline. The teachers were a model in various aspects to their students, which meant they had absolute authority over their students. However, she found the relationship between teachers and students in Australia to be more like friends who played in the same pool. The Russian teachers had authority in

terms of both discipline and knowledge, and they could use discipline to control their students' behaviour in the classroom, and to make sure the classroom rules and the teacher were respected. When asked whether she had changed herself to suit the Australian education context, Veronika said:

My subject is not common in Australia, so what I'm going to do? Even if I would like to do teaching, I have to readjust somehow. So, either I'm undertaking additional course and upgrade my knowledge or either I'm slowly moving out of teaching (Veronika, 27 May 2008).

Being trained in a completely different education context and a rarity among language teachers in Australia, Veronika fully understood the importance of developing herself to get used to the new teaching environment. Her unique language skills would not guarantee life long teaching employment if she did not continuously develop her knowledge and teaching capabilities. Sometimes the educational and social circumstances would enhance a teacher's enthusiasm. For some teachers, if the students cooperated with them, they could enjoy their teaching even in complicated situations. Rebecca indicated this:

I taught in two different types of areas in South Africa. The first one that I taught in was in a very multicultural school in Johannesburg. It was totally mixed in terms of everything, from race groups right through to different religious groups. I had classes of about 42-45 children and the discipline in the school was wonderful. The kids I was teaching could not speak a word of English. They would do their spelling. They would try hard. There was this whole ethos of really wanting to improve themselves (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

Rebecca said that she could deal with the complicated multicultural education situation when she was teaching in South Africa. She enjoyed the teaching there because the students would willingly cooperate with her. The students had a strong eagerness to learn and knew why they were learning. Their families were fully supportive of the teachers. Given the high unemployment rate in South Africa, the children there really knew that if they did not study and work hard at school they

were not going to get anywhere in their life. Rebecca indicated that the hard work and spirit of the students in South Africa actually encouraged her to try to help them even more. Compared with her experiences in South Africa, Rebecca experienced a cultural shock when she came to Australia, where teaching/ classroom experience was not as good as she expected:

What I found was such a culture shock in coming to Australia, is that the kids over here, you do obviously have some children that have good parental support at home but to be honest with you, a lot of the parents actually do not give a damn, not in the area where we are. When I got here and started teaching properly I almost wore myself to the bone trying to really push children. I had a very high level of expectation in terms of the work that I expected them to achieve. In the end I actually realised that I was running into a brick wall, to the extent that I was going to drive myself out of teaching if it carried on like that any longer (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

Rebecca indicated that some of the parents in this rural Australian town did not take the responsibility to encourage the students to study. At the beginning of teaching in Australia, Rebecca tried to use the teaching strategies which she used in South Africa to inspire her students to learn. She held to a relatively high standard of achievement, which she expected from her Australian students. However, before long, she found the situation was not as she had expected. In Rebecca's view, the goals she set for the Australian students are not too high. She felt deeply frustrated about the situation and confused as to why the students in a school with much better teaching resources and financial support, had much lower ambitions to develop themselves. Rebecca even considered quitting teaching if this situation could not be improved.

I said to myself I have to put myself first and must concentrate on those kids that actually want to achieve. In that class I can honestly tell you that there were 5 children that really want to learn in a class of about 33 children. It is not a priority for them to be there. I always said I would never let myself fall into the trap of just saying, 'oh, well, just get on with it'. But I'm finding I'm having to in order to actually get through the day (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

As an ambitious teacher who wanted to put all her students on the right track, Rebecca felt miserable that no more than one sixth of the students in her class really wanted to learn. Rebecca also felt exhausted from spending a long time to organise the order of her classes everyday. She thought the Australian students had good educational resources, but most did not value the chance to get a decent education. The main difficulty for Rebecca's Australian teaching career was that it was hard to find students who really wanted to learn. It was hard for Rebecca to understand why she had to pay much more attention to organising and managing her Australian students than to teaching them. In her view, this was a waste of her teaching time; students should perform well in the classroom. It seems that Australian students in this rural town need their teachers to prompt them to follow their teachers' instructions. The confusion this brought made Rebecca review her approaches to teaching. She adjusted her teaching expectations to the Australian teaching situation and the needs of her Australian students in this rural town:

I always try to do the best that I possibly can but I've found that I've had to lower some of my standards. First of all, I am teaching Stage 3 with some of my classes. I'm teaching a whole Stage below the so-called accepted government curriculum level because that's actually what they're achieving; I'm finding that the level in comparison to South Africa is actually much lower. I mean the school really does try. It's been a big adjustment from a teaching point of view, I haven't really changed too much of my actual teaching strategies or my philosophies as such. In South Africa I was one of the first teachers that was fully education trained and a lot of what I was taught to do. I apply very much the quality teaching framework across all of my teaching. (Rebecca, 11 August 2008).

Rebecca found her teaching approaches sometimes were not suited to Australian students. She also learnt from her Australian teaching experiences and tried to adjust to suit the Australian education context. Her reflections about her teaching were important to finding out what the Australian students in remote areas actually need in the process of their learning, 'I work the kids and they sometimes almost hate me for

it, but I'm actually starting to get results out of the children I am teaching' (Rebecca, 11 August 2008). She tried to keep those practices and ideas which she found advantageous and change those which were not suitable for Australian students. Rather than being too authoritarian she used other forms of teaching, to which the Australian students responded well. With renewed effort, she found the joy of teaching as her students began to accept her teaching approaches and progressively improved.

6.2 Adjusting qualifications

Faced with barriers to the acceptance of their overseas qualifications and previous employment records (see Section 6.2), some OTTs choose to gain local qualifications in order to gain employment as teachers. This strategy could play an effective function in helping OTTs obtain local experience and positions of employment.

Vanessa did not feel that the NSW DET treated the newly arrived OTTs in the same way as local beginning teachers and in particular, in not providing appropriate professional support. However, she did not bother with this issue, as she gained a local teaching qualification to enter teaching more smoothly:

I started my Masters at the same time. I just thought I cannot cope with everything and doing that as well. So that put me off when I had to weigh up whether to stay in the school system or go into the private sector. That was one of the factors I considered, which might be short sighted because ultimately I might well want to go back into the school sector (Vanessa, 13 July 2008).

The employment barriers made Vanessa chose to do a Masters degree at an Australian university. She saw that her sister, who was trained in Australia, gained more advantages in professional support and employment than she did as an OTT. She expressed her willingness to continue in the teaching profession in Australia, after gaining a local teaching degree. After being rejected by many early childhood schools for having mismatched qualifications, Anita decided to enrol in either a diploma

course or a university degree to gain a local teaching qualification.

Because that head teacher told us that there is no harm in enrolling now if you get a place in the university. Because of what happened, basically we are wasting time, so if we have to spend some time in getting a local qualification we will do it (Anita, 10 August 2008).

Anita felt that she had wasted much time in finding a proper teaching position in NSW, due to a lack of information. The Certificate IV she completed could only qualify her to work as a teacher's assistant in an early childhood centre. With the expectation of being a teacher in primary or early childhood school, Anita considered that a local university degree might make sure that she was qualified to find a long term teaching position.

In the above sections, the researcher has discussed forms of support provided to OTTs. They are information support, professional support, OTTs' peer support networks and OTTs' self adjustment in qualifications and teaching methods. The following Figure 3 may help to better explain which parties provide the most valuable support to OTTs. Within 78 valid responses, 39.74% (n=31) of survey respondents considered fellow teachers including school Principals, Head Teachers and mentors, to provide the most valuable support to them, while 32.05% (n=25) considered they were getting the most valuable support from family members and friends' networks. It can be seen that educational authorities, such as NSW DET, did not win too many votes for providing valuable support to OTTs (12.82%, n=10): 15.38% (n=12) of 78 valid responses expressed thoughts that no one provided valuable support for them and they had to do this on their own.

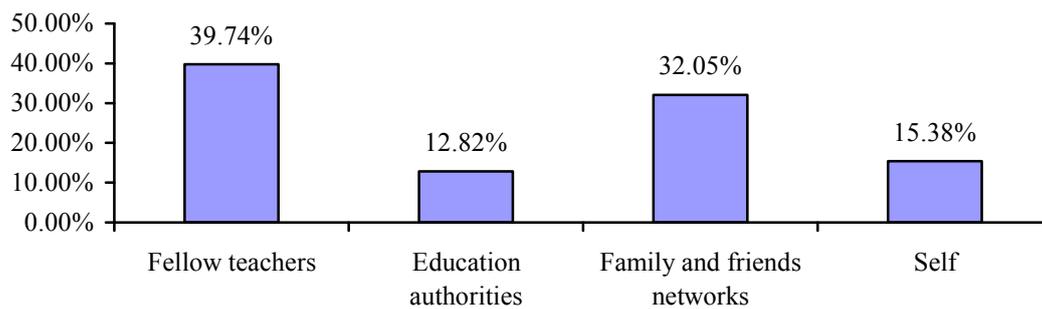


Figure 3
Who gives the most valuable support to OTTs?

Figure 8.3 provides insights that effective professional support from peer teachers or teacher networks as a kind of mentorship might be the most important approach for supporting OTTs. It reflects that simply providing training programs to OTTs will not necessarily mean that they can develop themselves in practical school teaching in Australia. Thus, it is important to establish a comprehensive ongoing teachers' support network, whether it is made of Australian peer colleagues or teachers from the homeland. In addition, Santoro (2007) argues that:

it is vital that school communities are genuinely committed to supporting them [OTTs] and understand it as the responsibility of the entire school community and not only the concerns of a few individuals and the teachers themselves (p. 92).

The professional development of OTTs may depend not on one single party, but on cooperation from multiple parties.

7. DISCUSSION

OTTs migrate to Australia as skilled workers with expectations of job opportunities. Confronting barriers to do with registration, employment, language, professional retraining and the lack of professional support is a challenge. These barriers are part of the portrait of the experiences of the OTTs who participated in this study. This does

happens not only in Australia, but also in other countries which are recruiting OTTs. In similar research conducted among OTTs in the UK, Miller et al. (2008) report that, before going to the UK, the participating OTTs lacked knowledge of ‘qualified teachers’ status (QTS), which is a British qualification recognition system for the OTTs. Given that OTTs have many years of overseas teaching experience but are new to the Australian education field, it is difficult for them to re-locate their professional identities. Hence, it is hard to decide which forms of support might be delivered to them. Peeler and Jane (2005) argue that a ‘lack of guidance causes newcomers to suffer a sense of hopelessness and non-acceptance, and their attitude becomes one of “Why bother?”’ (p. 329).

Some OTTs in this study chose to quit the teaching profession in helpless desperation, due to a lack of on-going support. However, according to the interview evidence, providing a series on-going professional supports is desirable and seems feasible. For instance, mentorship offers ‘a means of bridging the gap between the newcomers’ former ways of knowing and current practice, thereby mobilising their capacity to operate effectively as a teacher in their new contexts and develop a positive professional identity’ (Peeler & Jane, 2005, p. 325).

Santoro (2007, p. 92) argues that ‘effective professional development and mentoring programs for teachers of difference may support their retention in Australian schools’. It is important that the OTTs ‘receive ongoing school support, effective and sensitive professional development and are able to establish and participate in teacher networks in order to bridge some of the cultural differences they encounter’ (Santoro, 2007, p. 92).

However, Hartsuyker (2007), Chair of the Howard Federal Government’s committee of inquiry into teacher education, reported that the committee was unable ‘to undertake an assessment of the extent to which the various stakeholders have developed and implemented effective strategies in response to these challenges and

opportunities [on OTTs professional development]' (p. 36). It seems that it is very difficult to get appropriate research-based knowledge about such a complex problem. Teacher professional development, including the provision of mentorship to new teachers, deserves more attention in Australia. Without such government attention, Australia is 'unlikely to keep the finest teachers in the profession without more commitment to programs of reskilling and professional development' (Kalantzis and Harvey cited in Martinez, 2004, p. 101).

One of the reasons for the inadequate professional support is that the Federal Government cut the funding for language and information support in the mid 1990s. These funding cuts affected not only the professional support for OTTs, who are regarded in part as beginning teachers, but also Australia-trained beginning teachers. Martinez (2004) points that under devolution of funding to schools for professional learning, support for beginning teachers is not a priority, 'as the novices (who are at the bottom of the school power hierarchy) are unlikely to be represented on those allocation committees' (p. 103).

In this context, where professional support for Australia-trained beginning teachers cannot be guaranteed, support for OTTs assumes an even more challenging status. Another complication is that the OTTs are treated as experienced teachers, and not given access to similar teacher development programs as beginning teachers. This is a contradiction. Martinez (2004, p. 103) argues that 'support of newly appointed teachers and preparation and reward of mentors' is a system-wide challenge. Likewise, Santoro (2007, p. 92) argues that it is vital that school communities support ethnic minority teachers and 'understand [they have] the responsibility of the entire school community and not only the concern of a few individuals and the teachers themselves'.

With regard to the lack of formal professional support from education authorities, some OTTs organised their own informal peer support networks to help each other to

deal with professional issues. Using online communication tools is one of the good ways to seek professional support from peers. Martinez (2004) indicates that Internet communication via email and chat boards:

can offer new teachers intra- and interschool networking support to counteract the isolation that many new teachers experience. These facilities may be of special value for teachers who enter their career in rural and remote communities (pp. 101-102).

These online support networks can cross the traditional nation state border and decentralise the governance mechanism (Sassen, 2006). The OTTs can seek professional support freely with their foreign friends or colleagues by using Internet communication tools. Further, Peeler and Jane (2005) indicate that:

Contact with others in the profession can help them [OTTs] orient themselves to the theoretical and practical concepts of teaching and inform them of specific contextual orientations. Effective transitions form part of an evolutionary process that connects newcomers to the profession and helps them acquire the necessary skills and knowledge (p. 325).

The function of peer support networks has emerged as important in this study. Such networks seem to assist the newly arrived OTTs in realising the importance of adjustment, providing them with ideas about how to achieve it more efficiently. These peer support networks can be theorised using Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, which provides members in a group with collective-owned capital. Therefore, a support network composed of successful, experienced OTTs from similar ethnic backgrounds seems to provide useful and practical intellectual capital for in-coming teachers. These peer support networks comprise social capital.

Grenfell (2007, p.145) claims that people with similar social and cultural capital 'have an interest in supporting each other' via social networks and the 'nature of social solidarity itself is therefore transformed in the new order—as social capital'. In this sense, the OTTs connect their cultural capital—as teachers—into a peer support

network—social capital. This enables them to rework their accumulated foreign cultural capital (as teachers) via social capital to observe what they are lacking in local cultural capital. Being different from cultural capital, social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) reflects a collective feature of their immigrant status, so that ‘if you leave the group you lose the capital’ (Dovey, 2005, p. 286). Hillier and Rooksby (2005) argue that a group of migrants with similar migration backgrounds are likely to help each other to deal with problems in their new lives in a new country; these ‘social capital networks are vital to coping with the several shocks of a new environment’ (p. 31). Further, Hillier and Rooksby (2005) argue that these social capital networks are closely related to the cultural capital people possess, such that the more education the group members have, the more opportunities there are for sharing understandings of the new system.

The peer support network of the OTTs in the Australian education field can be understood ‘in terms of the configuration of their capital’ (Grenfell, 2007, p. 60). Since the cultural and social capital that OTTs carry or access on arrival is not valued in the Australian education field, they have to struggle to rework their foreign cultural capital by gaining access to other forms of capital in the field. Following, Grenfell (2007), it is possible to argue that no matter what forms of capital OTTs gain in this process, ‘it has value to the extent that it supplies “social energy”, which can be used to “buy” and make further investments in the field, thus working to establish preferential positions within it’ (p. 60). Peer support networks are useful for the OTTs to gain social and cultural capital which might better be valued as part of their professional learning, especially in a context where they lack authoritative professional support. This social capital can be further invested in, to help them gain more relatively-advantaged positions in the field.

Facing barriers to their professional support and qualifications recognition, some of the OTTs in this study choose to renew their teaching strategies and qualifications to fit the NSW education requirements. This too can be understood as a strategy of self

support. Hillier and Rooksby (2005) indicate that:

actors' behaviour will be related to their position in the field. Their behaviours will also be related to the resources available to them, and to their view of the field, including their ideological viewpoint and their perception of which issues are worth fighting for, this last being constructed from their position in the field (p. 23).

Some OTTs are situated at a relatively low position in the NSW education field, due to their shortfalls in fulfilling all the requirements of local teaching qualifications, and enculturation through work experience.

The support resources that they can access are limited, as they are classified as experienced teachers. Some of them gave up the teaching profession when faced with these problems. However, for those who chose to stay in teaching they were able to secure support for adjusting themselves to meet the qualification and work experience requirements. This means there was hope in their minds, as they considered it worthwhile to struggle to gain a position in the field on their own. Bourdieu (2005) indicates that the struggles in a certain field are such that:

every agents acts according to his position (that is, according to the capital he or she possesses) and his habitus, related to his personal history. His actions, words, feelings, deeds, works, and so on, stem from the confrontation between dispositions and positions, which are more often than not mutually adjusted, but may be at odds, discrepant, divergent, even in some sense contradictory (p. 47).

Here habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) is taken as a social action developed through the agents' previous knowledge and experiences. The struggle to adjust the habitus of OTTs reflects 'a set of meaning that individuals attach to themselves by themselves and for themselves with a view towards the presentation of self towards others, must also be seen as a practical practice that flows from a habitus ensconced in a field' (Widick, 2004, p. 200). The self-support and adjustment of OTTs to their cultural capital comes under the influence of their habitus, which mediates their engagements

with the NSW education field, resulting in ‘actual dialectic exchange between subjective (habitus) and objective (field) into a psycho-social conflict of self-overcoming’ (Widick, 2004, p. 224). Those OTTs who positively transform their identities adapt to the new field; for some this is a challenge, a few withdraw from the field.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper analysed evidence of the OTTs’ sources of support with respect to their employment as Australian teachers. It also analysed evidence of how the OTTs practice in a situation where they lack authoritative standing in the NSW education field. The documents from the NSW Teachers Federation show that the OTTs secure their professional learning through induction and other forms of support. Inevitably, there are concerns about whether the induction program can provide adequate support for OTTs to get used to the NSW education system. There are concerns about whether the current professional support helps OTTs to re-establish their careers in Australia. Some OTTs do not gain enough information and explanations from official documents; this leads them to waste time and money. The survey data shows that more than half of the respondents are satisfied with the PeP but also, a portion of them are not satisfied with the professional assistance they receive. The interview evidence tends to support the survey data in that 5 of the 13 interviewees mentioned the lack of professional assistance in the school practicum or follow-up support while teaching. This raises another concern about self-support for adjustment, and if education employers can provide more on-going professional support. In this way, the experiences and diversified educational cultures of OTTs could deliver what the government wants.

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