

A Study on Professional Acquisitions and Improvements of Foreign Instructors Who are Teaching in Turkey

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Abstract: Importance of education has been increasing day by day in globalizing world. Borders around the education are being broken and internationalization is growing in education field. Beside this, there are many academic papers and studies in this field in international journals. Those papers also have shown that the international experiences provide many acquisitions to the instructors. This study aims to determine the acquisitions of the foreign instructors who are teaching in Turkey. For this purpose, we have interviewed with 17 foreign instructors in Turkey. Interviews have been performed face to face. The findings of the study show that the instructors' acquisitions are: self-confidence, recognition of new systems, researcher instructors, and pleasure of international experiences. The remaining details have been discussed in the findings, conclusions, and recommendations section.

Keywords: International Study on Education, Education Management, Professional Improvement, Academic Improvement

1. Introduction

The globalization of the higher education all around the world has increased the importance of the economic point of it. Further, the system of the education has started changing in every country day by day. Education anymore is not within the borders of countries but global. As a result of this situation, administration of the higher education institutions intensifies their instructors to have international experience either. The reason why the instructors are willing to have international experience is to increase their capabilities and knowledge. Beside this, there are not very many researches on how those instructors get use of international experiences or the experiences of their colleagues (Bodycott & Walker, 2000). This paper aims to understand and abstract the acquisitions of the instructors who had international experience on that field. Furthermore, the aim is to understand the problems that they face during this time.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Career

The word "career" means to be promoted at a job, increase the level of position, and having a job that one has been willing to have it already. Although the word career is used for job in our daily life, it scopes a wide meaning than that. The career may be evaluated as experience that a person has during his/her job experience. By another meaning, career can be considered as series of jobs during the work life of a person (Sabuncuoğlu, 2008, p.168-169).

As a summary, career is levels that a person passes, works that s/he has done during those levels, and the knowledge that s/he had as acquisition (Bakioğlu & Özcan, 2001, p.41).

2.1.1 International Career Development

It was seen that global career development has increased the importance after the borders of career have been widened worldwide. The impacts on this development are those (Thomas, Lazarova & Inkson, 2005, p.342-344);

- Global competition and transfer of the knowledge
- The improvement of the global leaders
- Not only because of the competition among the developed countries, but also the competition among the developing countries have also increased, the economic and educational competition of the international career development also increased the importance. For the international career development, the organizations are signing worldwide strategic partnership. By this way, the information became easier via various networks in order to have the competitive advantage to another country or organization. For this reason, it is very important to get use of international experienced employees (Thomas et al., 2005, p.342).

The results of one of the studies, which have been performed on 594 German managers in 59 different countries to understand the career acquisitions of those managers, has shown that those managers evaluate this experience as very important for their career although they faced many problems on their career management (Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002). In many of the developed countries, the managers prefer the initial time of their managerial experience abroad not by being assigned over their managers but with their own willingness (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Tharenou, 2003).

Thus, it can be said that employees and managers may have better future and career if they have a good international experience.

2.1.2 International Career Development of Lecturers

One of the studies on international career developments of instructors have been performed on English instructors who have been transferred to United States of America due to their strong pedagogical knowledge in order to educate their colleagues in U.S.A. According to the results of this study, the acquisitions have been gathered within the seven dimensions. As conclusion of study, group of learning, time to think deep, self-improvement, culture, observation of different education systems and approaches, learning how to use new technology, and oracle were the main acquisitions of the study (Purves, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2005, p.556). These dimensions have been explained as;

- Group of learning: The Instructors, who have participated in that study, have determined that they have learned a lot by being in a new group. This experience has contributed the instructors to question their knowledge and improve themselves. Of the instructors, 47% has determined the importance of this factor in international career experience (Purves et al., 2005, p.557).

- Time to think deep: 29% of the participants have determined that while they have been abroad, they had time and place to think about many things. In normal circumstances, there are three reasons why they can't think deeply in their work and normal lives. First, they are struggling to finalize their works on time. Second, there is no time for new improvements in schools. Finally, they need to reload their energy to motivate themselves for self-improvement (Purves et al., p.558).
- Self-Improvement: This can be also defined as professional improvement. Opportunity to think, the enthusiasm which is gained by meeting people, perspectives to the new ideas and sharing them and such factors have increased the self-confidence of the instructors. 23% of those instructors have determined self-improvement as a result of international experience (Purves et al., 2005, p.558).
- Culture: of the instructors, 12% expressed that they had opportunity to elaborate the philosophic and cultural basics of education (Purves et al., 2005, p.559).
- Observation of the new education systems and approaches: Many of the instructors have expressed about the importance of observability of the pedagogies and applications of the educational systems. By this way, the instructors have started re-evaluating their current system in hometowns and borders in the current work environment in their hometowns (Purves et al., 2005, p.559).
- Oracle: For some of the instructors this experience helped them to think about different implementations and approaches rather than their own ones. By this way, it was an opportunity to be aware of new approaches (Purves et al., 2005, p.560).

By qualitative analysis of the researches it was seen that the international experience of instructors make them think global and different way than usual. In the same time, these instructors became more sensitive about different culture and nationalities of students. The instructors, who have this experience, can evaluate the differences between countries they had experience their hometown. These instructors have understood the power of the language and culture and as a result, they had another acquisition as evaluating the language learning from inside and outside. By this way, they have realized and developed different techniques for the problems that the students face during their learning process (Alfaro & Quezadab, 2010, p.53).

As a solution to the problems that students are facing in the classes, Bodycott and Walker (2000) have selected appropriate materials for students to be more appropriate to solve language problems. They have analyzed the lack of willingness of students to participate and they have solved this problem by individualizing the activities. They have increased the in-class participation of students by individualizing the classroom activities. This study is important to see the impact of cultural perception on teaching and learning activities (Bodycott & Walker, 2000, p.91). Allen (2010) had some results that show some information about cultural issues. As an increase at their knowledge, instructors can tell some anecdotes from their lives and this way they may increase their reliability in students' eyes.

Results of studies (Alfaro & Quezadab, 2010; Allen, 2010; Purves et al., 2005), which have been proposed on instructors who had international experience, have shown that this experience doesn't improve the instructors only from their professional sides but also the personality sides also.

There are many foreigner instructors teaching in Turkey. Those lecturers seemed to be very enthusiastic to teach in abroad and have teaching experience in a different country. We understand this from the increase of TOEFL, IELTS, TESOL examinations of instructors in order to prove sufficiency of their English level to teach. It can be said that this experience will improve their methodologic and the pedagogic sides. On the other hand, according to the investigations of academics during ten years, it was observed that these instructors in the same time having many various troubles during their experiences on social, economic, pedagogical...etc. fields.

2.2 Purpose of the Study

- 1- Problems that the instructors who are teaching in turkey and the solutions of these problems.
- 2- What are the acquisitions that instructors are having during their experiences in Turkey from their careers point of view?

2.3 Importance of This Study

The way of improving for Turkey, as a country which struggles to enter the European Union, is to empower and develop the system of education and by this way educate strong brains. Turkish education, which has many problems, can consider this globalization in education as a point of development. This study is important to understand the acquisitions of the instructors during their experience of teaching in Turkey.

3. Methodology

In this study, qualitative method has been used in order to evaluate the findings deeply and in details. The qualitative method is a strong method to understand the ideas, emotions, feelings of people via interview (Stake, 2005; Yin, 1984).

3.1 Model of the Study

This is a qualitative study. In this concept, the instructors have been interviewed one by one face to face. By this way, their ideas, views of the world, emotions, and perspectives tried to be understood. This model is an effective way (Kuş, 2003). Interviews are categorized in three classifications such as structured, partially structured and non-structured (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). In this study, structured model of interview has been proposed.

3.2 Target Population

Target population of this study consists of foreign instructors which are teaching in Istanbul during 2014-2015 educational years. Those universities which have been selected from Istanbul are Maltepe University, Bilgi University, Kemerburgaz University, Fatih University, and Nişantaşı University. Those

instructors have selected based on volunteer criteria. There were 15 English instructors in the group of research.

Of the population, 35% was male while 65% was female. 70% of the participants were master degree holders and 30% of them had only bachelor degree. 35% of them were married while 65% of them were single. The experiences of the participants who have participated in this study were 6 years and less in average. The average age of them was 32. This result shows that the young generation is more intended to have abroad experience in their professional life.

Table 1: The characteristics of the participants

| Code | Age | Gender | Nationality | Single/ Married | Education | Experience (Total) | Experience (Turkey) |
|------|-----|--------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 40 | M | Canada | Single | Bachelor | 4 | 1 |
| 2 | 29 | F | U.S.A | Single | Master | 3 | 1 |
| 3 | 27 | F | New | Married | Master | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 31 | F | Austria | Single | Bachelor | 9 | 3 |
| 5 | 29 | F | U.S.A | Single | Master | 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 26 | F | U.S.A | Single | Bachelor | 3 | 2 |
| 7 | 44 | F | New Zeland | Single | Master | 14 | 4 |
| 8 | 26 | F | U.S.A | Single | Master | 4 | 2 |
| 9 | 35 | M | England | Single | Master | 8 | 5 |
| 10 | 31 | F | Austria | Married | Master | 2 | 2 |
| 11 | 28 | F | U.S.A | Single | Bachelor | 4 | 3 |
| 12 | 25 | F | U.S.A | Single | Bachelor | 2 | 1 |
| 13 | 30 | M | England | Married | Master | 6 | 4 |
| 14 | 31 | F | England | Married | Master | 6 | 4 |
| 15 | 47 | M | U.S.A | Married | Master | 17 | 5 |

3.3 Data Observation

In this study, the data have been gathered by interview technique. The problems and acquisitions that the foreign instructors have been tried to understand via asking some special semi-structured questions to the participants. Those questions which have been prepared have been asked to the group of foreign instructors which was determined in 2014-2015 educational year.

3.4 Evaluation of the Results

The data, which was gathered from the interviews with the foreign instructors, have been evaluated by content analysis technique. In order to evaluate the data appropriately, the findings section have been divided into subsections. In the discussion section the findings have been discussed.

3.5 Researcher Instructor and Professional Improvement

Most of the participants have expressed that studying before coming to the class in order to be prepared for the lecture have improved their abilities. *“I have been English instructor in Canada before coming here. The language in Canada is already English. But it is not the case in Turkey. The case was very different here. Teaching to Turkish students was totally different. I have started studying how to teach here, grammar topics again, and prepared some sort of texts to teach”* (2) said one of the instructors.

Some of the problems make instructor improve himself. For instance, *“Students don’t perceive speaking and listening as real topics, because these are not grammar. So that they are not speaking. Because of that, I am struggling during class to act like an actor to encourage them to speak”* (1) says one of the instructors. This shows that the instructor gaining an acquisition by solving a problem. Further, *“the students don’t perceive me as a figure of authority in the class. I am having difficulty to state discipline inside the class during my lessons. For this reason, I have participated in different seminars, educational workshops to solve this problem”* (6) says another instructor and showing that he also solved the problem by making some sort of researches. Another similar experience was by another foreign instructor. *“working abroad has shown me that what we have been doing in our school was not very realistic. May be if I worked in United States, I would see differently but one year of experience made me think about how I can implement the things what I have got, to Turkey. After a couple of time, I have could perform some implementations during my classes. By the way, working in a private university made my job easier”* said instructor. By this way, the instructor shows how he had experience and how he tried to implement his acquisitions to the education in Turkey.

3.6 Recognition of Different Education Systems

One of the important parameters that affects learning styles of students is the in-class implementations of instructors. Foreign instructors think that the education in Turkey is student focused but instructor focused.

“... I have learned that the being an instructor is not only entering into classes and explaining the lessons. There have been many things to learn. I have decided to do something different after working sometimes in my own country. I knew that I could teach English all around the world if I received Delta & Celta diplomas. I have worked in Japan first. One of my friends has very good things about Turkey. I have come here. What I have learned in Japan was that it wouldn’t be so easy to live in Japan unless I would thing like Japanese; I am trying to do the same for Turkey also. Canada consist of immigrant population; they need this kind of experience from my idea point of view because they also sometimes face some problems of understanding students and it is not so easy to learn all these things by reading

from a book” said one of the instructors and determined that one can be more able to understand the philosophy of being an instructor.

3.7 Change in Professional Attitude

Working abroad has affected the way of teaching, attitudes, methods, and habits of instructors. Teaching to students from different cultures have made instructors faces some various problems inside classes. The reason of this might be differentiation of expectations from culture to another one. This situation has forced instructors to improve their abilities of teaching and differentiate their ways of teaching. *“I have learned a lot about my language. I have more knowledge about the things which are easy or hard to understand for Turkish students (15)”*.

The ideas are gathered in one point that requires the separation of education from all aspect of the states’ issues. *“... I can say I have started looking more totalitarian. I thing anymore there must be something common among the nations about the education. I have realized here that there is someone who are also human like me and they also need the same things like we need.” (14)* said an instructor. Another instructor which supports the same saying have expressed that *“anymore I can say that education is an international issue which is above nations. You know, if Amazons are destroyed, this is not only problem of Brazil or Columbia, or if the Glaciers are melt, this will not be the problem of only Scandinavians. I have started seeing the education the same. There is no advantage of uneducated people of Africa to developed countries. Wise versa, it has many disadvantages. For these reasons, the education is an issue over the nations.” (15)*

3.8 Social and Cultural Improvements

International experience doesn’t improve instructors only from education point of view but also from the cultural and social points of view. The foreigner instructors had opportunity to find out how to learn a new culture and to adapt to that culture. *“In my country, I have learned how to improve career only in academic way. The advantage of learning this issue in Turkey was that I have learned how to communicate with the students inside classes and how to communicate in a foreign country practically due to this was a part of my life during that experience.” (3)*

Teaching in a foreign country has enlarged the borders of career development of instructors and helped them to improve their language abilities. *“I am trying to improve my Turkish because I see this time as an opportunity to improve my career and enrich my private life”.* (13)

One of the participants has expressed about the advantage of abroad experience as getting rid of positive or negative prejudices about nations and societies. *“I have learned about how unjust the prejudices were. I had some doubts in my mind before I went to Korea. Then I have moved there and started my job. I didn’t have time to think while I was working but I have thought during the nights. I had a friend there and he introduced me to other Koreans. By this way, I have started knowing many different people. After sometimes I have learned that the culture and way of thinking was different but good. I can briefly say that it has taught met get rid of my prejudices professionally.” (14)*

3.9 Self Confidence

The value of negative experiences and difficulties that taught to an instructor is very higher than others. The educators evaluate this case as useful if they learn what the situations teach. The participants have expressed that the abroad experience has increased their self-confidences. *“Beside everything, I have been teaching in Turkey, which is a country that I have come with many fears, for 3 years. Within this period my self-confidence has greatly increased. I feel like swimming in ocean now while I have been swimming in a pool before”*. (7)

Global instructors remember the difficulties that they had abroad and these difficulties help their improvements. Cushner ve Brislin (1996) expressed that the difficulties help instructors improve this abilities and self-confidences. *“Going to an unknown world is a brave behavior. I couldn’t realize how bravely I have behaved when I have decided to go abroad. Later, I have realized that this brave behavior returned me back as self-confidence.”* (8).

4. Discussion

Working in a different country has changed the way the instructors evaluate the education, the methods of them, attitudes, and habits. Teaching to different students from different cultures has created troubles to instructors. The reason for that is the differentiation of the expectations. Teaching abroad helped instructors to perform an auto SWOT analysis to see their strengths and weakness in their education. Beside this, they have developed their professional abilities and conform the expectations of different cultures and nationalities from them. As a result, this experience has helped them to increase their communication skills by learning how to overcome the educational problems.

The results of this study show that the abroad experience has helped instructors to develop their abilities to learn different systems, applications, and student profiles and by this way improved their teaching abilities. Solving the problems during the adaptation process has helped instructors to improve their abilities to solve problems. By this way, they have learned critical thinking.

Beside this, the approach to the profession of teaching should be revised worldwide and needs to be redefined. It needs to determine that teaching experience in Turkey will provide an improvement on careers of foreign instructors.

5. Conclusion

In this globalizing world, it is absolute that the education is also the part of this process. Thus, the nations should be attentive with the changes on the global education systems of all in higher education, primary, secondary, high school...etc. It became vital to have some information about the global education after the borders around the education have been broken. The best way of having knowledge about an education system is teaching in the concerning education system. By this way, instructors may learn not only about the structure of education systems, but also about the strong sides and the weak sides of the systems.

Development of international career provides the staff that I capable to get accommodated with the global changes in this field. By this way, well experienced staff will help the education system of the concerning country to improve. International career development will not only improve academically but also will improve in social and cultural life of a country. By having experience in Turkey, instructors will have opportunity to understand the education system of Turkey, culture, traditions...etc. of Turkey. By this way international relations will also develop.

The data which have been gathered has shown that abroad experience having a long-lasting impact on foreign instructors. The results which were obtained by this study show that abroad experience of foreign instructors will increase their self-confidence due to solving troubles that they are facing during adaptation process.

6. Recommendations

The data that was gathered in this study show that abroad experience not improved only from education point of view but from many various aspects. The results of this study show similarity with the various studies proposed in different countries (Alfaro & Quezadab, 2010; Allen, 2010; Bodycott& Walker, 2000; Purves, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2005; Stahl, Miller and Tung, 2002; Tharenou, 2003). These results express the improvements of the instructors from language, understanding of a culture, problems solving, and self-confidence points of view. For this reasons, instructors should be encouraged for abroad experiences and should be educated to be capable to work abroad. By this way, the borders around education should be totally broken. This will bring the success and quality education equally all around the world.

The participants of this study expressed that they had lacking from the understanding of the various cultures and societies. They have said that they had problems on perception of different cultures those were stranger to them. By this kind of experience, they have learned how to deal with different cultures and live together with the societies of those cultures. Further, they have learned various ways to teach different cultures after coming over the adaptation period.

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