

WHY IS SAUDI ARABIA'S EFL TEACHER ATTRITION RATE SO HIGH, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO STEM THE TIDE OF TRANSIENT EFL TEACHERS?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article is focused on the high attrition rate of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It looks into the possible reasons that cause teachers to leave the country or the profession after spending a short time there, based on data collected from EFL teachers from across the Kingdom.

Approach/Methodology/Design: This study used a mixed methods enquiry design, initially carried out through semi-structured interviews in a qualitative manner. Five teachers who worked in various higher education institutes across the Kingdom were interviewed and questioned about various aspects of their professional life as a teacher in the KSA. Those interviews were subsequently analysed to create questionnaires which were then administered to a sample of 20 teachers. The returned questionnaires were analysed and reported in numerical charts for ease of visual clarity. The lower the figure, the less motivation or satisfaction there was in the field.

Findings: NEST attrition rates in Saudi Arabia are abnormally high due to a serious lack of cultural training by management and/or provider, poor induction once a teacher arrives in country and culture. NNEST attrition rates are more aligned to professional reasons, as they feel they are treated poorly by comparison with their NEST counterparts: lower wages, fewer promotion opportunities, not being taken as seriously by students and employers, and sudden discontinuance of contracts among the main reasons for NNESTs leaving their posts.

Practical Implications: The study makes suggestions as to how teachers' needs might be addressed in order to reduce the outflow of professional teachers from Saudi Arabia.

Originality/value: There is very little continuity in teaching due to large numbers of teachers exiting the Kingdom after a very short period of time. NEST attrition rates in Saudi Arabia are abnormally high due to a number of reasons.

INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia has made major investments into its higher education (HE) system over the past three or four decades, and has recognised the importance of providing its youth with a standard of education that will secure the country's future with bright innovators and business leaders to

compete on the world stage (Yusuf, 2014). The realisation that the English language is of paramount importance has not been lost on the country's HE experts, and large amounts of money have been spent on providing college and university students with an opportunity to learn English in order to communicate their business discussions and realise their potential.

This means offering an education that will raise the language capabilities of its youth, which includes English language skills (Yusuf, 2014). To achieve these ends, the Kingdom's Government also offers some of the highest wages in the world for EFL teachers. Coupled with a low cost of living, this makes an attractive proposition for expatriate English language teachers – both natives and non-natives speakers of the English Language – to work in the Kingdom. However, as both experience and research shows, attrition rates within the profession are extremely high (Alhamad, 2018).

In the main, there are three types of expatriate EFL teachers that work in the Kingdom. The first of the three categories are the Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) who tend to be the savers/travellers from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, Canada and the USA. They spend a short number of years in the country earning enough to top up a bank account that will help them cover future money concerns, or to fund travels across more poorly paid countries. Teachers often use teaching English as a means to gain more worldly experience (Stainton, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2017). The second category is the Native English Speaking Teachers who are religious converts (also NESTs) who want to live in a country that has significance based on their religious beliefs. Finally, there are the Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) who leave their native countries for better earning potential, and while they tend to be more vocationally motivated (Pacino, 2016), they are more often than not paid much less than their NEST counterparts (Loubser, 2015).

Even with such a high potential for earning and a low cost of living, teachers still, year upon year, leave the country en masse after only a short period of teaching. This leaves the Kingdom with both a consistency problem, and a merry-go-round training schedule for both management and new teachers in a rapidly changing and challenging environment. As this continual change is not conducive to student support, development and education, this study aims to find what are the causes behind so many teachers arriving and subsequently leaving their posts, and what could be done to halt the exodus (Alhamad, 2018).

Significance of the study

Although the Saudi Arabian Government has injected vast amounts of money into and across all levels of its education system over the past thirty years or so, teacher retention remains a serious problem. For any kind of stable teaching and learning pattern to emerge, there must also be some kind of quality and consistency in both the stream of education and in the teachers who deliver it. There is a wide gap in research that addresses where that consistency is lacking, and although there are a number of papers relating to some areas of teacher attrition in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the researchers identified a distinct lack of such in the particular areas in which this study will concentrate.

This study is twofold and sets out to achieve the following aims: the first is to explore past academic research to find commonalities with areas of dissatisfaction and demotivation that

lead to so many teachers leaving their positions, and secondly, it explores areas where support to teachers could be improved, and to offer possible solutions to address such shortcomings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher attrition rates are very high in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and managers face difficulties keeping hold of their best talent (Alhamad, 2018). Research has shown that some of the reasons for this are; inadequate high-level support, company policies, low employment values and poor use of the teachers' time while they are on the job (Brittler & Thabet, 2015), as well as poor administration and management (Mosadegh & Yarmohammedian, 2006). Other reasons included demanding authority figures, lack of monetary resources, poor training schedules and ineffective response to complaints or requests, and poor treatment of NNESTs (Alzaidi, 2007). Further, additional factors include a lack of support in teaching and a serious lack of career progression opportunities (Pacino, 2016). While it seems obvious that working conditions, unfulfilled promises of standard working hours, a lack of communication and disparity in salary would be a sign of poor management and certainly not a motivator, these were very real issues that led to objections and dissatisfaction among teachers (Pacino, 2016). Worryingly, Hanneman's study found underpayment, overwork and trying conditions in the workplace were the major reasons teachers found it difficult to stay focussed and deliver quality classes (2014).

Neither teachers nor learners benefit from substandard facilities or a lack of training or professional development, yet both battle against such on an all too regular basis (Ashraf, 2015). Problems often arise for novice teachers from the very beginning of their careers, and this leads to high attrition rates (Brighton, 1999). These issues range from poor training and an inability to cope with demanding delivery targets, poor preparation in training, wide differentiation in class and a feeling of hopelessness due to the unachievable expectations of senior management or institution (Alhamad, 2018). Another staggering figure Alhamad's study revealed was that 100 per cent of teachers reported they received no support or training whatsoever directly from their principals or management (2018). Also in Alhamad's study, more than 80 per cent of teachers felt as though they had been thrown in at the deep end without support, and felt that they were not well enough equipped to handle the day-to-day workings of a class (2018).

Nor were they adequately supplied with material. They had little time to become familiar with the curriculum or even the chance to settle in before they were thrown headlong into classes, having to rely on more experienced (though possibly not particularly good) teachers for support rather than the management providing it (Alhamad, 2018). Added to this are culture shocks that the conservatism of the country has on newly migrated novice teachers. These stark and often challenging aspects can be a heavy burden to bear for Western teachers and a great many teachers are unable to acclimatise to these conditions. This is further reflected in abnormally high teacher attrition rates (Shah et al., 2013).

Teachers tend to enter their profession to genuinely make their students' learning experiences better, rather than for the financial reward (Pacino, 2016). However, when these professionals seem to be thwarted from many angles; disparity in wages and discrimination (NNESTs), poor student discipline, lack of support with physical material provision, poor training schedules,

exclusion from classroom decisions such as which material and methods to use and unbalanced criticism/praise, it is hardly surprising many choose to abandon either the country or the profession altogether (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). One of the most complained about factors with teachers in Saudi Arabia is job satisfaction. When a teacher is happy in his work, he will often go the extra mile and work for a lower wage, though having said that, when they are unhappy they tend to deliver sloppy teaching (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998).

If Saudi's EFL teacher attrition rate is to either steady or decrease, there must be recognition of the importance of teachers and compulsory implementation of vocational training and the integration of technology (Khan, 2017). One way of avoiding resentment and raising the feeling of worth and appreciation would be to offer and show support in actions as well as words (Periansya, 2017). While there were a large number of schools and higher education institutions that do not cater for extracurricular activities or training, many teachers and students recognised that get-togethers would be an excellent way of providing morale boosting and a happier, more contented staff (Jamjoon, 2012).

There is clearly a case for looking further into this problem with a deeper study into demoralisation, as while some teachers still feel motivated, it appears it is more to do with factors such as finance or beliefs rather than furthering their vocational skills. If Saudi Arabia is to truly transform its education in EFL, steps must be taken to find the right teachers who are willing to stay the distance and gain professional experience. It should also ensure that HE providers deliver on their promises for delivering quality training and professional development for their teachers.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study used a mixed methods enquiry design. This was initially carried out through semi-structured interviews in a qualitative manner. In order to form a questionnaire, a number of semi-structured interviews were held to find the most pressing concerns among teachers within the Kingdom. Five teachers who worked in various higher education institutes across the Kingdom were interviewed and questioned (Appendix A) about various aspects of their professional life as a teacher in the KSA. Those interviews were subsequently analysed to create questionnaires (Appendix B), which were then administered to a more significant number (20) of teachers who worked across 12 cities in the Kingdom. This would provide quantitative measurable information. The feedback from the initial interviews was extremely negative, as had been both authors' experience from working in the KSA, therefore, although the questions may appear negative, this was due solely to the aforementioned feedback, and there was the opportunity for motivated and satisfied teachers to provide high marks should they have felt it was appropriate.

The subsequent questions were then broken into six subject areas; leadership and management, institution, students and teaching, peers and socio-cultural. The initial phase was conducted using a set of loosely based questions around management, source materials, motivation, job satisfaction and teaching generally in a Saudi context, and the responses were subsequently used to form a set of 102 structured questions that measured firstly, motivation and secondly, satisfaction using a Likert scale between 1 and 5. The lower the number, the less motivated or satisfied the teacher was (1 = very demotivated, 2 = demotivated, 3 = no opinion, 4 = motivated,

5 = very motivated) and (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = no opinion, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied). Each increment in number represents a 5% degree of (de)motivation or (dis)satisfaction. For example, if all 20 teachers were very satisfied that their management did not inflate grades (Q10), there would be a mark of 20 (x 5), which would equal a score of 100% motivation/satisfaction figure, however, the opposite would mean 100% demotivation/dissatisfaction figure.

Ethics

Ten of the quantitative participants were not known to the researchers and had never come into contact with them on either a professional or personal level. All participants were informed that their identities would remain anonymous, especially given the kind of research that required information about their job motivation, satisfaction and working conditions (Seidman, 2006, p.123). Information sheets and consent forms were also provided to each of the participants to inform them of the aims of the research, that all data collected would remain anonymous, and that their identities would not be revealed. Further, the consent form also informed them that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could choose to withdraw up till one month after the completion of the research. The participants were given pseudonyms to further protect their identities during the data analysis stage. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researchers and all the recorded interviews were stored safely on a laptop computer while the data was analysed. Similarly, only the researchers accessed the questionnaire information

Q No	Teachers' reasons for & levels of motivation	Motivation % to work in KSA				
> to <	Very demotivated, demotivated, no opinion, motivated very motivated >	VD	D	NO	M	VM
19	Management is clear. Teachers are given concrete instructions. Information on policies is readily available in adequate time for term start.	75	5	20	0	0
10	Grades of the students	50	30	20	0	0
17	The management's honesty with the teachers	50	25	25	0	0
9	Management's dealing with complaints made by the students against the teachers.	55	20	15	5	5
15	Favouritism amongst teachers	50	25	15	10	0
13	Leadership/management get due credit	35	45	15	5	0
2	Supervision	35	40	20	5	0
7	Supervisor's interpersonal relationship with the teachers	45	25	20	5	5
1	Understanding of the local culture by the management	30	35	35	0	0
18	Meetings with the management	45	35	20	5	0
5	Supervisor's knowledge of his/her job	40	25	25	5	0
8	Dealings with the students by the management	40	40	0	15	5
16	Leadership/management get due credit	40	20	35	20	0
14	Heads' careerism	30	35	30	0	5
6	Delegation of work	35	25	25	15	0
12	Management direction	30	35	25	5	5
4	Support from the supervisor	35	30	15	15	5
11	Management organisation	35	25	20	20	0
20	Mentoring provision for the teachers	30	30	25	10	5
3	Feedback from the supervisor	25	30	30	15	0
	possible score	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
	percentage of (de)motivation of teacher	40	29	21.75	7.5	1.75
	rounded figure	40	29	22	8	2
		VDM	DM	NO	M	VM

and copies.

Fig 1. Leadership/Management motivational responses (Pacino, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The returned questionnaires and figures were then analysed and reported in numerical charts for ease of visual clarity. The lower the figure, the less motivation or satisfaction there was in the field. These figures would provide a visual depiction of areas where there is most concern. The primary goal was to find the main reasons teachers find it difficult to stay working in Saudi Arabia. The factors that caused most concern for teachers was upper management and its continual failure to provide; concrete instructions, general clarity about tasks and expectations, support in areas of professional development, resources, transparency with teachers, support against student complaints without thorough investigation, proper leadership and unbiased treatment of all teachers. Following these complaints were; a lack of understanding of the local culture, incompetent supervision and little or no interpersonal connection.

Added to this was the fact that teachers felt they could not approach management with their concerns, and therefore felt there was no point in doing so. This was the major factor in both motivation and job and satisfaction for teachers, which points to them having little faith in matters changing or improving. Therefore, this area, and the most concerning questions (Qs 1 to 20), and will be the main focus of this paper, while questions 21 to 60 will supply figures regarding the motivation and satisfaction that working for a well managed institution provides. Figures (Fig. 1) showed a sustained trend of demotivation among teachers in the country. Heading the table were issues of poor management and leadership. The three worst-performing categories (leadership and management) were management ambiguity (Q19, 29%), student grade inflation (Q10, 34%) and management dishonesty (Q17, 35%). Not a single teacher felt motivated by any of these aspects of management. Only one teacher felt his institution fully supported him (Q4) while 65% of teachers felt dissatisfied with such. Looking at the whole section, it is plainly obvious that there is huge room for improvement in management techniques and administration. The highest figure for the very motivated section, of a possible score of 2,000, the figure reached 35, which converts to only 1.75% very satisfied rating, with almost 70% of teachers dissatisfied with their management and 21.75% having no opinion.

Satisfaction in these areas drew only slightly better responses with ambiguity and grade inflation being the two main areas for concern, and teacher favouritism accounting for a 75% (Fig. 2) dissatisfaction rate (Q15). Both charts demonstrate very similar findings for each of the questions. Even the highest scoring point (teacher feedback from supervisor – Q3) failed to reach even a 50% approval rate, without a single teacher said they were very satisfied. In fact, in all twenty points, from a possible ‘very satisfied’ rating of 2,000 it reached a score of only 55, which translates to 2.75% satisfaction.

Q No	Teachers' reasons for & levels of satisfaction	Current % Job satisfaction				
> to <	Very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, no opinion, satisfied, very satisfied >	VD	DS	NO	S	VS
19	Management is clear. Teachers are given concrete instructions. Information on policies is readily available in adequate time for term start.	75	5	15	5	0
10	Grades of the students	45	35	20	0	0
15	Favouritism amongst teachers	55	20	20	5	0
17	The management's honesty with the teachers	40	35	20	5	0
18	Meetings with the management	40	35	15	10	0
9	Management's dealing with complaints made by the students against the teachers.	50	20	15	10	5
16	Leadership/management get due credit	45	15	35	5	0
2	Supervision	40	25	25	10	0
13	Leadership	35	40	10	15	0
1	Understanding of the local culture by the management	35	35	20	5	5
4	Support from the supervisor	54	25	1	15	5
5	Supervisor's knowledge of his/her job	40	25	20	15	0
6	Delegation of work	45	15	20	20	0
7	Supervisor's interpersonal relationship with the teachers	45	20	15	15	5
14	Heads' careerism	25	45	25	0	5
11	Management organisation	35	35	10	15	5
20	Mentoring provision for the teachers	50	100	15	20	5
8	Dealings with the students by the management	35	35	5	15	10
12	Management direction	30	35	20	5	10
3	Feedback from the supervisor	30	15	35	20	0
	possible score	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
	Percentage	42	26.25	18.5	10.5	2.75
	Rounded figure	42	26	19	11	3
		VD	DS	NO	S	VS

Fig 2. Leadership/Management satisfaction responses (Pacino, 2016).

For all the expense Saudi Arabia has poured into the area, HE falls drastically short on providing the kind of support the Kingdom's present and future teachers need. Indeed, both Nolan (2012), and Al Asmari (2015) revealed many challenges that have to be addressed before progress can be made. Among them a shortage of audio visual aids, too large class sizes, poor Internet coverage, a shortage or complete lack of even the most basic materials such as pens and books, and existing curricula (Yusuf, 2014; Al Asmari, 2015).

Further problems include facilities that suffer from a distinct lack of necessary material and equipment (Al Sharari, 2016). While novice ex-pat teachers expect to receive training and be appropriately embedded in a system, they feel continually let down by out-dated and inappropriate curricula and little classroom support or offer of mentoring (Mansour et al., 2013; Al Sharari, 2016; Bhola, 2019). This presents a serious problem, certainly when considering the Kingdom has invested such large sums in English language education. Students' inability in English, their apathy, or their disinterest in their subjects accounted for 73% of teachers stating this aspect led to demotivation and dissatisfaction with their work, and those who did stay in the country were motivated solely by the amount of money they could earn (Pacino 2016).

The importance of training for all teaching staff – Arab and Westerner – was recognised as early as the 1980s when, with the advancement of globalisation, English language gained greater importance for the Saudi Government, who realised the level of English spoken for travel, science, diplomatic relations and large scale business was crucial to the country's standing on the world stage as a major business player (Adelman & Lustig, 1981). While this was true for the Kingdom, its growth and importance also indicated a greater influence of the Arabic language and culture on both a global scale and for those arriving to work in the country, where speaking the language makes creating friendships much easier (Cooper, 1980). While many companies offer language training, many teachers do not take these up (Ashraf, 2018). Several factors were mentioned that impeded delivery of quality lessons that included a lack of time for preparing classes, a lack of privacy for meetings and little or no professional development sessions (Al Qahtani, 2019). There were few chances for orientation to either the department or the country or introductions to quirks and nuances with the new culture. Leadership skills were also pointed out as being deficient or non-existent that contributed to failing delivery of effective education (Alhammad, 2000; Albatain, 2009).

Problems identified included dissatisfaction, demotivation, a lack of transparency, and poor communication (Al Sharari, 2016; Pacino, 2016). As long as these problems continue, Saudi Arabia will see its own students falling behind those of other countries and their education systems (Shannag et al., 2013). The distinct lack of management technique in both supervisory or management adds to the general slipshod or ad hoc organisation, with few in higher management positions having the necessary skills to perform the tasks with any sort of competence (Almakushi, 2003). While importance is given to the promotion of English in schools and colleges, unless more properly trained and capable teachers are hired current teaching staff will be burdened with longer hours and far more time spent on marking than providing support and guidance for their students: possibly proving to be the proverbial final straw for many students and teachers alike (Heppner, 2007). Inequality with wage structures was also a major complaint from NNESTs, with almost 70% of respondents to Subbaravalu and Al Kuwaiti's 2018 study stating teachers were not only overworked, but also saw financial reward fall somewhat below their NEST counterparts.

However, more than management and leadership issues were the concerns with poorly run institutions (Fig. 3). This second section, consisting of 40 questions, addressed institutional problems. Once again, there were very few areas within the institutions where teachers were very satisfied. Two of the questions (23; false promises from the institution, and 25; lack of job security) received the lowest score of all, followed very closely by question 26 (29% – teachers fired on the spot), while the corresponding responses to the institution's effect on job satisfaction revealed similarly depressing figures.

There can be little doubt that teachers who feel unappreciated and undervalued will almost certainly perform to a lower standard than those who are recognised for the work they do and the input they have in the classroom (Abdulkareem, 2015). A failure to address this issue has a very good chance of ending in abject failure (Mansory, 2019), as is the lack of appreciation for a job well done rather than merely heaping criticism on a teacher when something has gone awry (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Among the many worries for the education departments are problems with discipline, exhausted teachers who are made to work hours well beyond those

recommended and inefficient learning techniques and procedures (Hattie, 2005; Pedder, 2006), which leads to classes brimming with anxious students (Bahanshal, 2013), and 60% of one institution's teachers deciding the working environment in Saudi was too much to bear (Bhola, 2019).

Q No	Teachers' reasons for & levels of (de)motivation (institution)	Current % Job motivation				
> to <	Very demotivated, demotivated, no opinion, motivated, very motivated >	VDM	DM	NO	M	VM
21	Resources and funding allocation	50	20	25	5	0
22	Parental involvement	30	20	40	0	10
23	Promises kept by the institution	65	30	5	0	0
24	Competent and effective institution	55	25	15	5	0
25	Job security	65	30	5	0	0
26	Short notice contract termination	65	25	10	0	0
27	Teachers receive fair warning of contract loss	45	30	20	5	0
28	Career progression, advancement or growth	25	35	30	0	0
29	CPD opportunities	35	15	30	15	5
30	Integration procedure for new teachers	20	40	35	10	5
31	Guidance or support for new teachers	15	40	45	0	0
32	Orientation for new teachers	25	35	30	10	0
33	Living in KSA without family	35	5	25	10	15
34	Pay disparities between peer teachers	45	25	30	0	0
35	Assessment practices	35	40	20	5	0
36	Easier exams for students	40	45	15	0	0
37	Teacher recognition	45	35	15	5	0
38	Appreciation for teachers' hard work	45	30	25	0	0
39	Visa issues	55	20	15	10	0
40	Suitable/relevant curriculum	45	30	10	15	10
41	Salary	45	10	15	25	5
42	Payment of salaries	25	10	40	15	10
43	Benefits like health insurance	40	15	10	35	0
44	Innovation or improvement	45	20	25	10	0
45	Transparency in communication and what they try to achieve	40	35	15	10	0
46	Housing allowance/ accommodation problems	55	20	25	0	0
47	Eleventh hour culture	40	40	5	15	0
48	Culturally relevant teaching material and textbooks	40	35	20	5	0
49	The company's spend on resources and facilities	5	20	25	0	5
50	Syllabus and learners' level and needs	60	15	15	10	0
51	Consistent attendance policy	40	35	15	1	0
52	The students are able to keep up with the pacing guide.	41	40	20	10	0
53	Placement of students: proficiency and the classes they are placed in	60	50	20	0	0
54	Resources	35	25	20	15	5
55	Technology for teaching	40	5	25	20	10
56	Lack of technical training for teachers	30	20	50	5	0
57	Lack of facilities at work	35	25	15	20	5
58	Lack of working equipment	35	20	30	10	5
59	The work environment does not facilitate teaching	50	15	20	10	0
60	Teachers are treated disrespectfully at work	55	25	15	5	0
	possible score	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000
	percentage of (de)motivation of teacher	41.75	26.375	21.75	7.625	2.25
	rounded figure for % of (de)motivation	42	26	22	7	2
		VDM	DM	NO	M	VM

Fig 3. Institution job motivational responses (Pacino, 2016).

The focus on institutional inadequacies were spread over 40 aspects, and once again almost every area suffered low scores: the very satisfied and motivated columns both totalled less than 3% overall, which demonstrates the amount of room there is for improvement in these areas. Again, while the lack of facilities or functioning equipment scored low, they were certainly not the biggest areas for concern. The lack of recognition for teachers, the fact that students were incapable of dealing with the standard of language or learning expected of them, and the differentiation in class were also problems that needed addressing. Other complaints included that textbooks were inappropriate for the setting, there was a culture of eleventh hour operating procedures, a refusal to spend budgets when there was a clear need (and ability to provide such material), institutions allowing parental involvement, and the failure to adhere to absenteeism and lateness rules meant expected levels of learning were impossible to reach (Pacino, 2016).

Heppner's study also revealed that large classes are the standard rather than the exception to the rule (2007), further supporting this is Bahanshal's 2013 study that revealed teachers admitted to struggling – along with their students – to find ways to best serve the large classes with anything from 30 to 45 students sitting at one time, with all parties leaving the class feeling tired and worn out. This demonstrates the real problem of plus-sized classrooms, and a failure to deliver educational services (Omar, 2016). Hughes' study found that poor salary, poorly behaved students, limited parental involvement and a lack of professional recognition were a major cause of teachers leaving either the post or the profession completely (2012), and the above figures support that. Other complaints included monotony, unfavourable working facilities, longer teaching hours than had been stated in the original contract, and unfulfilled promises of training or wages (Subbaravalu & Al Kuwaiti, 2018).

With a heavy mixture of far too much teacher talk time and direct translations from native Arabic in order to lessen the load of teaching English, the majority of native Arab teachers delivering classes in English actually teach to the detriment of students' acquisition of communicative English language skills, with the target language rarely taught to an acceptable standard (Alfahadi, 2012). Added to this are the continual real-time grammatical and speech corrections, leaning less towards a communicative approach and more toward accuracy. Teaching to test is also commonplace as results are frequently not only target driven, but also unattainable due to unrealistic promises made by providers to college Deans (Pacino, 2016). There is also evidence to show that teachers can be prone to leaving the latest lesson delivery methods and theories at the classroom door and completely untried, while teaching strictly to the textbook (Pacino, 2016). Upper management has proved to be one of the main reasons that teachers stay in a post, though it is also one of the main reasons that they leave their jobs (Jones and Watson, 2017).

There are many challenges facing Saudi education institutions (Javid, 2014), among them are a lack of teacher preparation, poor quality facilities and a dearth of equipment and materials, although by the same token, many Saudi (nationals) teachers do not take up CPD programmes in the scientific field, and this may be indicative of Saudi teachers as a whole (Al Sharari, 2016). One reason for this is that some areas of teaching, science, for example, do not require specific certification before they are allowed to teach (Al Sharari, 2016).

Q No	Teachers' reasons for & levels of (dis)satisfaction (institution)	Current % Job satisfaction				
		VDS	DS	NO	S	VS
> to <	Very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, no opinion, satisfied, very satisfied >					
25	Job security	60	30	5	5	0
26	Short notice contract termination	55	35	10	0	0
50	Syllabus and learners' level and needs	65	20	5	10	0
23	Promises from the institution	55	30	10	5	0
35	Assessment practices	55	40	5	5	0
37	Teacher recognition	45	40	15	0	0
53	Placement of students (proficiency and the classes they are placed)	45	40	15	0	0
36	Easier exams for students	50	30	15	5	0
38	Appreciation of teachers' hard work	45	35	20	0	0
21	Resources and funding allocation	55	15	25	5	0
24	Institution's competence	60	10	20	10	0
51	Student absenteeism and attendance policy	60	15	10	15	0
52	The students are able to keep up with the pacing guide.	40	40	2	0	0
60	Treatment of teachers at work	50	25	20	5	0
48	Culturally relevant teaching material and textbooks	45	30	20	5	0
27	Teachers receive fair warning of contract loss	40	35	20	5	0
34	Pay equality	50	20	25	0	5
39	Visa issues	55	10	25	10	0
44	The college's system for innovation or improvement	45	25	20	10	0
45	Organisation's transparency in communication and what they try to achieve	40	35	15	10	0
49	The company's spend on resources and facilities	50	20	20	5	5
59	The work environment facilitates teaching	40	35	15	10	0
46	Sufficient housing allowance/ accommodation problems	50	10	30	10	0
47	Eleventh hour culture	50	25	5	15	5
22	Negative parental involvement	50	20	10	10	10
40	Suitable/relevant curriculum	30	40	15	15	5
32	Orientation for new teachers	40	25	15	15	5
29	CPD opportunities	40	10	30	20	0
28	Career progression, advancement or growth	35	15	35	15	0
56	Technical training for teachers	35	30	10	20	5
57	Facilities at work	20	45	20	10	5
30	Integration procedure for new teachers	45	40	5	15	15
55	Technology for teaching	35	30	10	15	10
58	Working/functioning equipment	40	25	5	15	15
54	Availability of resources	15	40	30	15	0
31	Guidance or support for new teachers	30	5	30	10	15
33	Living in KSA without family	35	15	20	25	5
41	Salary	40	10	15	30	5
43	Benefits like health insurance	5	25	35	0	15
42	Payment of salaries	20	0	25	30	25
	possible score	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000
	percentage of (dis)satisfaction of teacher	43.375	25.125	17.5	10.125	3.625
	rounded figure for % of (dis)satisfaction of teacher	43	25	18	10	4
		VDS	DS	NO	S	VS

Fig 4. Institution job satisfaction responses (Pacino, 2016).

This leads to students suffering from a lack of enthusiasm for scholastic work, and while they miss classes, are continually late and have little yen to learn when they do turn up, these problems are exacerbated when added to the fact that many Saudi EFL teachers are habitually

unprepared or improperly trained. Further problems include students' low proficiency in English language, a lack of interest in learning English, second language anxiety, over-crowded classes, and an almost complete lack of technological support (Javid, 2014). Given that English is not widely spoken outside the classroom, authentic environments are virtually non-existent and without this their progress is hampered. This makes attendance, punctuality and class work all the more important (Ashraf, 2018), though attendance rules are regularly and systematically flouted without recourse for the student (Pacino, 2016), which leaves many of them with an apathetic attitude towards their education and language learning.

The Saudi Government has been trying to revamp, revitalise and improve the curriculum for delivering English language since the early 1980s, however, one of the major sticking points seems to be the inability to separate the use of English language from the quirks of Saudi culture to be able to deliver successful classes while adhering to the strict conservative nature of the country (Alfahadi, 2012). As early as 2014 the Saudi Ministry of Education identified and attempted to address education as a priority. So much so that almost a quarter of the country's budget expenditure was spent on education in that year, when a number of new university campuses were built and hundreds of older institutions had major facelifts (Saudi Arabia Record Budget for 2015). And while there have been strides forward in recent years under the current leadership, there is no doubt that room for improvement still exists and needs addressing (Elyas & Picard, 2018).

A further drawback for Saudi students has been that they receive little or no exposure to English until they get to high school age, which leaves them with weak English skills by the time they are at college or university level, highlighting the extremely high failure rate (70%) of college-level students in English exams (Alfahadi, 2012). As there is so little interaction in English outside of the classroom setting, many teachers hold the belief that classes are simply not authentic enough, and until there is a more realistic context there will be little progress made on a grander scale (Khan, 2011; Hall, 2011; Shehdeh, 2012).

Suggestions and possible further study

In order to halt or even reverse this exodus, there has to be a shift in methods of delivery, more thorough and relative teacher training and professional development, and a genuine concern and adequate provision for the students and teachers. There must also be a smoother and more rigorous inauguration into the country and its culture for teachers in order that they fully understand the nature of the work, the students, the culture and the country they are going to commit themselves to. One glaring feature of this study is that there has been very little research conducted on both the demoralisation of teachers in this context and poor management, which might also shed further light on attrition rates and help halt the all too heavy turnover of EFL staff in the Kingdom.

As we have seen, motivation and job satisfaction are two of the most important factors for teachers staying in a post. Unless senior management recognise and address these points, the high teacher attrition rate is almost certain to continue. The many aspects of both management and the way an institute organises (or not) its training programmes, professional development regime and how it supports and treats its staff have a huge effect on how teachers develop trust in their management and feel secure in their posts. It is not only within the operation that teachers need support either. External factors such as families, visa issues, health matters and

accommodation also affect a teacher's mind-set and their happiness with the company or the job, and contribute to teachers feeling that they are undervalued.

Recognising where problems arise and understanding how they can be addressed are vital for institutions to hold onto their talent and stem the drain that could stunt the growth and progress of pedagogy – and thereby the future talent – in the Kingdom. In order to do this, senior management must first look towards training themselves and other decision-makers, equipping their institutions with the appropriate sources and materials, and inducting their staff both culturally and professionally to the country.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

While there has been little expense spared in terms of funding Saudi's ambitious plan to deliver English language skills to larger swathes of the population, much of the plan seems to have fallen at the first couple of hurdles. Many factors that have caused this to happen; however, at the heart of the problem is that there is very little continuity in teaching due to large numbers of teachers exiting the Kingdom after a very short period of time. NEST attrition rates in Saudi Arabia are abnormally high due to a number of reasons; the most common being a serious lack of cultural training by management and/or provider, poor induction once a teacher arrives in country and culture. NNEST attrition rates are more aligned to professional reasons, as they feel they are treated poorly by comparison with their NEST counterparts: lower wages, fewer promotion opportunities, not being taken as seriously by students and employers, and sudden discontinuance of contracts among the main reasons for NNESTs leaving their posts. In order for the situation to improve, all of these factors have to be considered.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest with this paper.

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