

NAVIGATING “PRAXIS SHOCK”: DISENTANGLING AN EARLY CAREER TEACHER’S EMOTIONS AND ACTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION THROUGH A MICROPOLITICAL LENS

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Abstract: In the present research, we seek to study the process of organizational socialization of early career teachers (ECTs) through a micropolitical lens that focuses on the issues of power, control and influence as part of the ECTs’ sense-making of and acting in their job. By means of a case study with a beginning Vietnamese university teacher, we attempt to answer two questions: (1) what sorts of emotions does the ECT experience in her organizational socialization, and in challenging micropolitical situations in particular? (2) what kinds of action does the ECT employ in such situations? The research material consists of three narrative interviews within one academic year. The findings highlight the importance of the micropolitics of the school as an organization and the multiple emotional dimensions that are present when ECTs strive to reconcile the school micropolitics with their own beliefs and values as teachers. Along with that, the research contributes knowledge about how ECTs learn to negotiate challenging micropolitical situations using diverse types of micropolitical actions. Implications are also proposed with regard to teacher training and induction.

Keywords: micropolitics, early career teachers, emotions, micropolitical actions

1. Introduction

The induction phase for *early career teachers* (ECTs, also called *beginning teachers*) is generally characterized by their constant search for a professional self and reflection on their motives for becoming a teacher (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day et al., 2006; De Vries et al., 2014). This period, however, has also been associated with specific challenges and complexities, provoking a form of “praxis shock” (Gold, 1996; Intrator, 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet,

2002a, b; Veenman, 1984; Wideen et al., 1998), which is their “confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test, challenges some of them, and confirms others” (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b, p. 105). Whereas the technical dimension of teaching (i.e., knowledge and skills) has been extensively investigated with regard to ECTs’ induction period, there have been scant attempts to unravel the cultural and structural working conditions

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(micropolitics) that they are confronted with (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b).

As ECTs enter the teaching profession, they also become members of an organization. The organizational socialization of ECTs constitutes an essential task for teachers as much as their classroom teaching (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). This process of socialization, according to Kuzmic (1994) and Zeichner and Gore (1990), is an interactive and interpretative process between the new teacher and the context. Not only are ECTs influenced by the context, but they also affect the structures in which they are socialized. While trying to adapt their professional beliefs to the socializing forces within the school culture, they also attempt to defend existing professional beliefs that they value and wish to maintain (e.g., Loughran et al., 2001; Mesker et al., 2018). In the present research, we seek to study the socializing process of a beginning teacher with a view to exploring the emotions and the actions that she employs in her organizational socialization, particularly when facing structural challenges. Through a micropolitical lens, we focus on the issues of power, control and influence as part of the ECT's sense-making of and acting in their job. In brief, we attempt to answer two questions:

- What sorts of emotions does the ECT experience in her organizational socialization, and in challenging micropolitical situations in particular?
- What kinds of action does the ECT employ in such situations?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Micropolitics in Teacher Induction*

When looking at the induction period and the key players within the school as an organization, we cannot help but adopt a micropolitical perspective in order to

understand these processes of socialization and professional development. ECTs, when embarking on their teaching career, hold certain normative ideas about what constitutes desirable or necessary working conditions for them to do a proper job as a teacher (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, b). At the same time, they become part of an organization that lives by certain traditions and more or less subtle power relations between members with different interests. The ECTs are thus confronted with a micropolitical reality in their socialization process (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b).

The micropolitical perspective takes the idea of different interests among members of an organization as a central focus (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991, 1997). According to Hoyle (1982), “[m]icropolitics embraces those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests” (p. 88). Power and influence, in this sense, include conflict, tension and rivalry, but they also involve collaboration and coalition building in order to attain shared, valued goals (Blase, 1991). The micropolitical perspective, hence, deals with a natural phenomenon in the functioning of any organization, where micropolitical processes occur as a result of internal as well as external interactions of its members (Ball, 1994). From this perspective, the functioning of the organization members is largely determined by the desirable or necessary work conditions, constituting professional interests. When these conditions are absent, threatened or abolished, ECTs will engage in micropolitical activities aimed at establishing, safeguarding or restoring them (Curry et al., 2008; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, b; Vanderlinde & Kelchtermans, 2013).

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a, b) identified five categories of professional interests. First, the *self-interests* refer to

interests related to teachers' self-understanding and their beliefs about themselves as teachers. As such, these interests mainly have to do with looking for self-affirmation, coping with vulnerability and with the visibility in their job. The second category involves *material interests*, which encompass issues concerning the availability of and teachers' access to teaching materials and resources, infrastructure, or time. The third category, *organizational interests*, is related to teachers' role, position, and structural conditions. In the case of early career teachers, these interests may incorporate, for example, the job description or contract terms, which are related to getting and keeping employment. The fourth category comprises *cultural-ideological interests*, which are the shared normative ideas about good education and the school's mission. These interests often come into play when there are discrepancies between the teacher's own task perception and job motivation and the dominant culture in the school, or when they have remained in the school for a relatively long period of time. Finally, the *social-professional interests* are about the interpersonal relationships in and around the school as an organization, which also include those with students' parents. Since good professional relationships are important, in their interactions, teachers will be selective, establish preferences for some fellow teachers, keep others at a distance, and be strategic in seeking people who best support their job (Baker-Doyle, 2011).

2.2. Emotions and Actions Through a Micropolitical Lens

Emotions have been increasingly recognized in studies on teachers' work, self-understanding, commitment, well-being and exhaustion (e.g., Jokikokko et al., 2017; Lassila, Jokikokko, et al., 2017; Lassila, Timonen, et al., 2017). The topic of emotions is highly relevant in research on

teacher socialization, given the fact that ECTs do not simply slide into an existing context but they also actively interpret and interact with the context (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Thus, emotions are not merely teachers' private experiences, but are products of meaningful interactions between teachers and their working conditions (Zembylas, 2007). When teachers feel strongly about something, the feeling most likely means that it is significant and meaningful to them (Zembylas, 2007), and actions are oftentimes triggered accordingly (Jokikokko et al., 2017). From a micropolitical perspective, recognizing the structural context of the school enables us to better understand these emotions and actions, as we delve into how school organization, politics and culture inextricably intersect with the teachers' personal values, beliefs and qualities.

Previous research on micropolitics in teacher socialization has explored some of the ways ECTs make use of political actions to safeguard their interests and deal with challenging situations in the workplace. Blase (1988) identified that when teachers' beliefs, values and goals and those of the administrators, faculty, parents and parents conflicted, their response would most likely be to protect themselves from others and to proactively influence others. The resulting micropolitical strategies that he identified could be put on a continuum from reactive to proactive strategies, including *acquiescence*, *conformity*, *ingratiation*, *diplomacy*, *passive-aggressiveness*, and *confrontation*. Whereas reactive strategies aim at maintaining the situation or protecting the teacher against changes or external factors, proactive strategies are geared towards improving the situation and impacting the circumstances. *Acquiescence* refers to overt conformity and adherence to the wishes and commands of others. This response is usually elicited by external, often illegitimate influences and is typically

accompanied by extreme negative emotions. *Conformity* is similar to *acquiescence* in its protectionist concerns, usually linked to compromises made by teachers in order to stay afloat. However, unlike the former, the latter is not so often associated with strong negative feelings. Next in the continuum is *ingratiation*, which emphasizes reciprocation (i.e. exchanging favors), influencing others, and which is normally accompanied by negative emotions. Blase (1988) put it another way that this technique is intended to "flatter" or "brownnose" another in order to defend oneself and achieve one's goals. The technique of *diplomacy*, on the other hand, appears to represent a balance between protection and influence, is usually employed with tact, politeness, friendliness, positivity, and empathy for others in mind, and is often correlated with positive emotions. On the more reactive end of the continuum are *passive-aggressiveness* and *confrontation*, both of which are aimed at influencing the situation. The former employs indirect, covert, and "devious" methods to discredit the acts of others, whereas the latter usually involves directness, frankness, and honesty, and is generally driven by strong personal or professional values/ethics.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b), while recognizing Blase's action strategies in their definitions, argued that the different variants of micropolitical actions have to be understood as cyclical or iterative, rather than as positions on a continuum. Actions to restore lost working conditions are, for example, reactive in goal and direction of action, but they imply proactive strategies that aim at improving the situation. They therefore suggested that in reality micropolitical action can take a variety of forms: talking, pleading, arguing, flattering, being silent and avoiding comments, avoiding taking sides, accepting extra responsibilities, changing the material working conditions, using humor, and so on.

A simple inventory or list that summarizes all micropolitical strategies and actions is not relevant, if not possible, because any action may become micropolitically meaningful in a specific context (Blase, 1988, p. 11). To illustrate, they profiled the "political" learning process of a beginning Flemish schoolteacher in which he learned to employ a variety of political strategies under different circumstances (see Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a). In order to get a job, the teacher made himself "visible" by actively self-marketing, leaving a good impression about his professional qualities. When coping with structural power, he made use of proactive strategies, confronting the stakeholders. When trying to position himself within the school team during his short interim contract, he chose to keep an emotional distance, standing aloof from his colleagues. When things did not go as expected, he looked for and concentrated on other comforting aspects of the situation to maintain a satisfying balance of the positive and negative aspects.

Other more recent studies that focused on the reactions of early career teachers in extreme micropolitical circumstances have shown that some may become cautious and withdraw, while others see these obstacles as learning opportunities that open up room for professional growth (Bullough, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2005). Hong (2012) revealed how ECTs who remained in the field after the first years established emotional boundaries that helped them avoid making their perceived professional problems personal. In their case study of a Finnish secondary teacher, Jokikokko et al. (2017) demonstrated how both proactive and reactive micropolitical strategies were employed in maintaining and changing challenging situations. Lindqvist et al. (2020), on the other hand, investigated conflicts as a particular aspect of school micropolitics, suggesting four major sets of coping strategies common among the

participants, including collaboration, conformity, influencing, and autonomy. Through the micropolitical lens, a more nuanced understanding of the process of teacher socialization is created, explicating how emotions and political actions arise as a result. In the context of Vietnam, however, to the best of our knowledge there is currently no research on the emotions and micropolitical behavior of beginning teachers in the socialization process from the perspective of micropolitical theory. To fill this gap, this paper examines how the process of socialization that a beginning teacher in Vietnam experiences in their induction triggers emotions and micropolitical actions accordingly.

3. Research Design and Methodology

The central focus of our exploratory study is the early career teacher's experiences of the organizational socialization process during their induction, with a particular focus on their emotions and micropolitical actions. Therefore, a qualitative design was chosen, with a focus on a single case. The choice of case study is particularly suitable for "practical problems" because it is specific in focus (Merriam, 2009, p. 43), and has distinct advantages when it comes to answering the "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2003). Narrativity forms the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. A narrative inquiry, with its "evaluative and explanatory value", will facilitate the meaning-making process between the researcher and the participant (O'Shea, 2014, p. 141), therefore enabling a deep exploration of the subject's perspective, emotions, experiences and construction of knowledge. In the study, narratives serve as both a research approach and a primary source of data. Story telling enables us to "understand the experiences and the way they are told, seeking clarity about both the events that have unfolded and the meaning that participants have made of

them" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 231). As they are based on experiences, the accounts serve as mediating tools that contextualize emotions in broader social, cultural and political contexts (Riessman, 2008, as cited in Jokikokko et al., 2017).

The research's participant is a beginning university teacher, hereinafter referred to as Linh (pseudonym). At the time of the interviews, Linh was 22 years old and had just graduated from a bachelor's program in English language teacher education. She worked under a renewable one-year contract, teaching English for non-majors at a state university in Vietnam. Linh began her job two months before the new school year as a probationary teacher. As the school year started, so did her official contract. Her job mainly involved teaching English to first-year students of both the Advanced Educational Program (AEP) and the mainstream program. Her classes consisted of 30 to 50 students, all of whom were non-English-majored. The faculty where she belonged was a relatively small one, with 15 teachers. Also new to the faculty at that time were two other female teachers, who were the same age as her.

To capture the changes and processes in the participant's narratives, we conducted three interviews: the first one around the middle of her first semester, the second one at the beginning of her second semester, and the third one near the end of her second semester as a teacher. These are critical points in a school year, allowing the ECT sufficient time to reflect on the different events that have occurred during her socialization. The interviews had basically the same structure, with questions focusing on the participant's relationships at work, positive and negative events in her socialization, as well as her reflections of such experiences. However, the interview questions were also broad enough for the participant to be able to recount her experiences with their own plots, using her own words and choice of orders, so as to

ensure the nature of narrative interviews. The interviews were done within 60-90 minutes and audiotaped, with respect for privacy, i.e. the subject's beliefs, attitudes and opinions.

After verbatim transcription of the audiotapes, the interview protocols were coded in two cycles: initial and axial coding (Saldaña, 2015). By means of initial coding, we assigned open codes to the data, labeling the issues addressed in the text fragments. After that, in the process of axial coding, we compared and examined the relationships among the initial open codes, in order to group them into broader categories of codes. Once the coding was completed, we conducted a narrative analysis of the subject's experiences, using a holistic-content approach (Lieblich et al., 1998). Narrative analysis, as opposed to an analysis of narrative, uses a narrative form to frame data, and a plot to connect distinct experiences together and establish the context for understanding (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2016). By following the principles of a holistic-content approach, we analyzed all three interviews in the context of the whole story, detecting the themes relevant to the research questions and their development throughout the interviews. The inductive analysis of the data was done with careful reference to the conceptual framework (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, b), in such a way that the findings would be congruent with the literature. Afterwards, the interpretations were communicated with the subject so as for her to validate how her experiences were portrayed. The narrative, accordingly, was a co-constructed production resulting from the process of dialogue and negotiation between the subject and the researcher.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Below, we present the findings of the study. The first section provides an overview

of the emotions experienced by the ECT in her organizational socialization (Research Question 1). In the next three sections, we present three anecdotes, through which the emotions and actions of the ECT in challenging micropolitical situations are demonstrated (Research Questions 1 and 2).

4.1.1. The Emotional Panorama of an Early Career Teacher: Joy, Bewilderment, and Frustration Amid Intricate Power Relationships

In the interviews, Linh spoke warmly of her students and showed her enthusiasm for the teaching job. From her first classes, she set out to engage with her students on a personal level, becoming a close mentor to many. The better she understood her students' circumstances, the more inspired she was to help them progress in their learning and personal development. From her close observations, she noticed that:

What seems to be their biggest disadvantage is their mindset, which I believe has largely been shaped by their social backgrounds. I mean, they typically underestimate their own potential and dare not think big, while in fact there are abundant opportunities out there at university if they know some English. But they are usually timid and thus shy away from the opportunities...

Her particular attention to students' difficulties may have stemmed from her previous experience of teaching practicum at a private school, where students were from well-off backgrounds and had ample possibilities for exposure to English. With her own pedagogical beliefs, Linh was keen to take care of individual students so that she could "know how they feel and offer them timely orientation." She was also eager to impart life lessons and teach them reasoning and social skills. Having been a dynamic student herself at college, she quickly

became involved in planning extracurricular activities, which she believed would help her students “make the most out of their student life.”

Whereas the word “excitement” characterizes Linh’s emotions towards her students and the teaching work, her interactions with the fellow teachers and the overall structural organization of the faculty so often caused her to feel conflicted, if not irritated. Being new to the job herself, she confessed to filling a considerable amount of time preparing her lessons. At the time of the interviews, she was responsible for about 36 to 40 class periods (30 to 33 hours of teaching) per week, which she already found daunting indeed. She reported feeling drained by the endless amount of lesson planning and extra-curriculum for the faculty’s English center that she was tasked with organizing. While recognizing that organizing extra-curricular activities was her asset and a good opportunity for her to become more well-rounded as a teacher, she felt that she was missing out on opportunities to hone her teaching skills, which were then her priority at work. In the second interview, she mentioned proposing a workload reduction to the dean, yet the response she received was “just find a way to minimize the amount of time you spend planning lessons until the side work is reduced” (“which was never reduced”, remarked she.) Although her workload remained the same, the conflicting feelings gradually got less intense as told in the third interview, as she came to realize that extra-curricular activities were just part of every faculty’s added values outside the teaching and learning indices in their mutual competition. Therefore, as a faculty member, she felt compelled to devote her time and effort for the sake of the organization.

There were, however, episodes linked to the “unwritten rules” in the faculty and some colleagues’ attitudes that caused Linh to feel annoyed. “When a task comes

from some particular people,” she said, “we are not supposed to say no.” Also recurring in her stories was her resentment being downplayed. Linh mentioned some older colleagues were dismissive of her competence, saying that she was “too confident while not performing up to [her] qualifications.” The fact that she was young and new to the workplace, hence, caused her to not only be assigned unreasonable tasks, some of which were not at all work-related, but also to be demeaned by colleagues who barely had the chance to know her personally and professionally. Throughout the interviews, Linh revealed her attempts to justify her own professionalism by proactively taking on a number of responsibilities at work. Although she was unsure about her colleagues’ change of attitude towards her, Linh believed that it was her rectitude and proactiveness that made a strong impression on the dean, who would then generally be listening to her views.

Several aspects relating to micropolitics can be observed in Linh’s stories. The faculty as an organization operated according to its own beliefs and practices, with its own priorities regarding what constitutes its strengths and competitiveness over the other faculties. The faculty members, including herself, were with their specific professional interests. Linh, as a beginning teacher, was to affirm her professionalism against her colleagues’ skepticism, while also seeking to struggle for her material interests in terms of time and resources. She strove to establish close, attentive working relationships with her students and the two fellow beginning teachers, and yet retained a rather wary stance towards some other colleagues who attempted to use their informal power to put her in her place. At the center of her socialization stories lie various emotions: excitement towards her teaching and students, confusion when it came to

questioning her own professional ideologies against the faculty's prevailing traditions, and annoyance when confronted with unreasonable tasks, ungrounded judgments, and in certain instances, the entire micropolitics of the faculty.

We further illustrate the micropolitical picture of Linh's induction by presenting three exemplary anecdotes chosen from the interviews with her. Through the anecdotes, aspects related to micropolitical actions in challenging micropolitical situations will be detailed.

4.1.2. Calls "From Above"

One week before the Lunar New Year holiday, I and the two other beginning teachers suddenly received a long document from one of the faculty's "core people". The document was his wife's, which obviously had nothing to do with our work. It was 80-page long in Vietnamese, and we were asked to translate it into English before the Lunar New Year. Since we had no other choice, we had to split the task among ourselves. Clearly, these were not part of my work requirements, but because they came from "certain people", I wouldn't be able to reject them. Anyway, I found it irrational and I felt really angry, but I couldn't help it...

This anecdote reveals an aspect of micropolitics concerning vulnerability, as Linh could not be in full control of the circumstances she had to deal with. The task was imposed on her, and although she found it irrelevant, she had to perform it nonetheless. The "more or less subtle power relations between (groups of) school members, with different interests" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b, p. 107) was made visible when some "certain people"

deliberately used their higher position as an excuse for making the beginning teachers do what is beyond their professional duties. Emotionally disturbed as she was ("I found it irrational", "I felt really angry"), she chose to reluctantly accept to do the task ("we had no other choice", "but I couldn't help it...") In this case, the micropolitical action that she chose to take is a form of *acquiescence*, i.e., overt behavioral compliance and obedience to the expectations/demands of others (Blase, 1988, p. 131). The demand that she was supposed to respond to was somehow illegitimate within the context of the workplace, leading to intense negative emotions as a result. Her choice of complying with the demand in the anecdote could be seen as her own way of safeguarding her organizational interests. In order to keep her employment, she chose to stay silent and act as requested, despite her unwillingness to do so. Silence, then, is both a micropolitical strategy (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a) and a strategy of emotional labor (e.g. Liu & Zhang, 2014) when teachers must maintain composure when dealing with society's expectations and the repercussions the choices of action could take.

4.1.3. Learning by Shouting, or Not?

My faculty decided to cooperate with a language center, whose method of teaching, in my opinion, was quite problematic. Students who followed this method were asked to stand in class and recite memorized English texts aloud. They learned pronunciation using their hands and feet instead of transcription, and they were asked to get up early at 5 a.m. to run while yelling an English text aloud. Although this method seems to have helped some students become more confident when speaking English, I found that they were actually memorizing without

understanding what they were saying. I expressed my concerns about this teaching method with the teachers in my division. Although they agreed with the shortcomings of the method, they refused to voice their opinions to the faculty. After that, I was even more disappointed to know that the faculty had even purchased books and teaching software from that language center. “That was confusing indeed”, I thought; so I came to express my opinion with the dean but received no approval. He even asked me to work with that center in order to learn from their method and help build an English club for the faculty. I accepted the assigned task, but only to the extent that I would help them meet my students. Other than that, I deliberately chose not to follow their method. After a couple of weeks, as the dean noticed the disparity in our teaching viewpoints compared to the partner center, and seeing that I had frankly expressed my disagreement from the outset, he eventually agreed to take me off the project with that center...

In the above anecdote, the conflicts of cultural-ideological interests of the different stakeholders at the faculty were revealed. Linh certainly held her own pedagogical ideology when she challenged the validity of the learning approach introduced by the language center (“...they were actually memorizing without understanding what they were saying”). The dean, however, seemed to be in favor of this new technique, as he insisted that Linh learn it from the center and help build an English club together with them. From the position of a leader, it could be the case that his

emphasis on cooperation with the language center may have arisen from his wish to promote the image of the faculty by experimenting with novel methods and establishing partnerships outside of the university. Linh's colleagues, though in agreement with her about the learning method's dubious outcomes, remained quiet about their views. Meanwhile, she chose to approach the dean and talk directly about her concerns when her feelings got intense (“That was confusing indeed”, “I came to express my opinion with the dean”). When she was required to work with the center, which was against her will, she politely agreed to undertake the task, yet used her own power as a teacher to choose not to follow the method which she found problematic. In this instance, the micropolitical behavior she took seems to mirror a concern with both protection and influence. Motivated by a strong task perception and job motivation, she worked to establish more desirable working conditions. Although this implied confrontations, the way she handled the situation was with much tact and diplomacy.

4.1.4. Extracurricular Activities: Whose Extra Duties?

This semester [the second semester] we had a talent contest for students of the AEP of our faculty. Originally, Ms. Huong, one of our colleagues, was in charge of it. However, the date of the contest was approaching and nothing had yet been fixed, so in the faculty meeting, I raised some of my ideas. The dean seemed convinced, I guess, so he appointed me to lead the project together with Ms. Huong. Ms. Huong and I then discussed ways to extend the application deadline and turn the event into a large-scale one. We were really stressed not only about making

rules but also how to communicate with students so they wouldn't get confused by the changes. Most importantly, we needed to keep the image of the contest and the faculty with whatever decision we would make. I thought things were going well and "BOOM" – Ms. Huong told me that she would stop working at the faculty in a week's time to prepare for her study abroad. By that time, we had already been approved by the dean to expand the contest to students of the whole university and universities all over the city. Ms. Huong passed everything to me, and then I was the only one to take charge of the project! There were lots of things to do on the checklist, so I asked my colleagues to register to do them. Turned out, only the two other new teachers put their names on the list. Some teachers were doubtful about the plan and told me to be less ambitious, some said they were already too busy, and so they refused to take part in the organization of the contest. I didn't try to persuade them, though, but I decided to recruit 10 students from the AEP to run the event instead. We had about a month for the organization and I think everything went quite smoothly, from applying for sponsorship, designing backdrops and banners, sending out invitations, to handling all the logistics stuff, except that I felt totally exhausted. Three days before the event, the dean was taken aback to see my name and the two other new teachers' all over the checklist, without the participation of the other colleagues. He quickly assigned some of them to help us with the rest

of the preparation, and this time they joined us. Fortunately, our event went smoothly. The only sad thing I learnt was that he was pretty angry with the colleagues who refused to help out. I don't know if I should have done differently to involve them from the beginning...

The anecdote highlights the teacher's relationships with her colleagues. Based on Linh's description of the situation, it seems as though the other teachers in the faculty were not very cooperative in this particular event. When they were asked to register to take part in the event organization, the teachers seemed to show little trust to Linh as a team leader ("[s]ome teachers were doubtful about the plan and told me to be less ambitious"). In her previous interviews, Linh at times mentioned how some teachers were "a bit skeptical" of her professionalism. In all likelihood, they assumed Linh's ideas for the event would not turn out successful, considering the fact that it was her first time being a project leader at the faculty. Nevertheless, it appears that their lack of participation was due to their concern for time, i.e., a matter of *material interests*. This is seen to be a subtle, implicit micropolitical precept within the faculty, that organizing extracurricular activities falls mostly on the shoulders of beginning teachers. The older colleagues did not seem to be interested in participating, and in fact, they only did so at the behest of the faculty administrator.

While Linh was not quite supported by her colleagues, it was clearly evident from the anecdote how she actively took actions to handle the situation. Linh took the initiative in proposing ideas to the people with authority and voluntarily accepted extra responsibilities. Even when her colleagues refused to take part in the organization, she nevertheless stayed diplomatic by not attempting to plead with them, nor informing the administrator. Instead, she resorted to her

students to assist with the project, and despite being “totally exhausted”, she and the two other beginning teachers managed to handle the tasks satisfactorily. From the anecdote, Linh seemed to have learnt the unwritten rules of the faculty that extracurricular activities are expected to be beginning teachers’ duties. Although it is an indication of inequality between teachers, these tasks also appear as opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities (Jenkins et al., 2009). This explains how she on the one hand made visible the micropolitical rule of the faculty (proactive micropolitical actions), but on the other allowed the faculty to preserve its unwritten micropolitical rule by doing what was required of her (reactive micropolitical actions).

4.2. Discussion

In this section, we discuss our findings and situate them in the context of the existing literature on the micropolitics of teachers’ organizational socialization and the related emotions and micropolitical actions.

Linh, the ECT in our study, was in constant negotiation about how she should act as a teacher. While these kinds of negotiations are routine for teachers at the beginning of their career, they can be elevated in pressure-filled settings. In her interactions with different stakeholders in and outside the faculty (her students, colleagues, superintendents, and the faculty’s cooperative partner), Linh has gradually grasped the micropolitical implications in the job. This process of learning is understood as ECT’s development of *micropolitical literacy* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a), that is, when ECTs “learn to ‘read’ the micropolitical reality and to ‘write’ themselves into it” (p. 756). During this process, Linh underwent a mix of emotions. The initial excitement was gradually accompanied by feelings of disappointment,

confusion, sometimes even frustration or anger when confronting a challenging work environment. These kinds of emotions have been found common among early career teachers (Hebert & Worthy, 2001); however, on top of that, Linh maintained her enthusiasm towards her students and the teaching job throughout her first year as a teacher. Although her socialization process involved plenty of obstacles and her professionalism was challenged, she managed to address different situations with her own agency, incorporating different strategies and actions, finding a balance between micropolitics and her own ideals.

We identified major micropolitical actions on the basis of the subject’s proactive and reactive concerns. With regard to proactive concerns (i.e., establishing desirable working conditions), it was evident that Linh frequently took initiatives, making herself visible to the faculty administrator. In their earlier research, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a) also indicated how developing and maintaining contacts with prominent gatekeepers serves as a self-marketing strategy when early career teachers look for, as well as embark on their teaching job. In addition, she also made visible the culture and some of the unwritten rules in the faculty (e.g., faculties compete in a variety of aspects other than academic training, and extracurricular activities are expected to be beginning teachers’ duties). Her acknowledgement of the nature of these unwritten laws thus had an impact on her subsequent thoughts and behaviors. This is quite clearly an indicator that finding one’s position as a teacher in the faculty’s established micropolitical context is not just a passive adjustment but part of a process in which an early career teacher consciously interprets and interacts with the context (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Linh’s third course of micropolitical action involves taking on more responsibilities at work, so as to look

for self-affirmation and recognition by colleagues and superintendents. These kinds of acknowledgement, according to Gold (1996), are important sources of positive self-esteem for early career teachers, which Linh in this case strove to establish.

Apart from her proactive micropolitical actions, Linh also employed actions that were geared towards reactive concerns (i.e., safeguarding or restoring desirable working conditions) when the situations got more challenging. First, she frequently had direct talks with the administrators – in this case, the faculty's dean. Although this approach did not always change the situations, it was a means of justifying her professionalism and thus safeguarding her material, socio-cultural, as well as self-interests. Being silent was her second frequently employed action when being exposed to intense situations. Silence, in this case, was not a sign of indifference to or ignorance of the workplace micropolitics. Instead, it demonstrated how the early career teacher began to develop her micropolitical literacy by being selective in terms of reactions. The silence had different meanings in different situations – a form of acquiescence when there were no other choices, but also a form of diplomacy when dealing with difficult, uncooperative coworkers. This “culture of silence” (Jokikokko et al., 2017, p. 68), seems to be common in the workplace, given the fact that failing to do so could threaten their position at work (Uitto et al., 2015). Finally, we identified an interesting kind of action, which we called “quiet opposition”. When, for example, a proposal of change was not agreed upon, the early career teacher would remain quiet on the outside but inside, she would react strongly by concrete behavior (e.g., accepting a task that was against her professional ethics, yet refusing to compromise by acting according to what she believed would be beneficial to her students).

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1. Conclusion

Our study explores an early career teacher's experiences in the organizational socialization process during her induction period. Taking a micropolitical perspective, reflecting on Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a, b) five categories of professional interests, we attempt to make sense of the early career teacher's emotional reactions and behavior in her socialization, as well as in specific, challenging micropolitical situations. Over the course of one year, the ECT underwent a mix of feelings as a result of her various encounters with different stakeholders, on top of which she maintained a sense of enthusiasm towards her students and the teaching job. Through a micropolitical lens, her actions have also been explored on the grounds of both proactive and reactive concerns, reflecting her incremental development of micropolitical literacy as part of her socialization into the organization.

5.2. Implications

The results of our study present some implications for teacher induction research. In their induction, early career teachers are not just inductees who wait around passively, but they are also initiating participants. In the school's micropolitical climate where they work, teachers form emotions and adopt micropolitical strategies to help them negotiate intricate situations. Therefore, it is important that early career teachers be trained as “organizational persons” who possess the necessary skills to function in an organization (Friedman & Kass, 2002). These skills include “an understanding of organizational processes, communications within the organization, group decision-making processes, and most of all, the importance of equipping teachers with skills in informal aspects of relationships among colleagues, and the

capacity to deal with difficult social situations arising within the organization" (Friedman & Kass, 2002, p. 165).

Secondly, our findings indicate that early career teachers are not only those in need of support, but they also possess strong expertise and professionalism that can benefit other teachers as well as the organization as a whole. These findings are, in fact, in line with the present-day paradigm shift from the deficit/ remedial perspective which views them as lacking particular competencies and thus are in need of support to adapt to the norms and expectations, to more nuanced representations of early career teachers. Kelchtermans (2019), for example, proposed three alternative representations to frame early career teachers and their induction, including the early career teacher as an actor or agent, as a networker and as an asset. Taking a non-deficit approach, therefore, means acknowledging them as professionals who bring with them knowledge, expertise, and networks to contribute to the school's development.

Finally, in light of the micropolitical perspective, our study also suggests deeper investigations into the development of early career teachers' *micropolitical literacy* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Teacher education programs could integrate the *knowledge aspect* of micropolitical literacy – that is, acquainting students with “the necessary ‘grammatical’ and ‘lexical’ knowledge of processes of power and struggles of interests” (p. 117). To do so is to contribute to developing their self-efficacy, which will ultimately lead to increasing teacher retention.

5.3. Limitations

Our research is based on narrative interviews with a single case, with an intention of capturing the richness of the early phase in a teacher's profession. By focusing on the small anecdotes, we took into account the context and the historical

continuity of the story. However, given the exploratory nature of this kind of research, the heterogeneity of a quantitative method would also act as a triangulation to the quality of the data. Furthermore, we find that some comparison of experiences within the same school context, as well as between early career teachers across different settings is worthy of investigation. Finally, although we have limited ourselves to the study of a university teacher, we feel that it would be equally valuable to discover more about the experiences of schoolteachers, who constitute the majority of the teaching staff in Vietnam.

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VƯỢT QUA “CÚ SỐC VÀO NGHỀ”: KHÁM PHÁ CẢM XÚC VÀ HÀNH ĐỘNG CỦA MỘT GIÁO VIÊN MỚI TRONG QUÁ TRÌNH HÒA NHẬP THÔNG QUA LĂNG KÍNH CHÍNH TRỊ VI MÔ

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu được tiến hành nhằm tìm hiểu về quá trình tham gia vào tổ chức của các giáo viên mới vào nghề thông qua lăng kính chính trị vi mô, tập trung vào các vấn đề quyền lực, kiểm soát và ảnh hưởng như một phần trong quá trình hiểu và hành động của các giáo viên mới vào nghề. Nghiên cứu đặt ra hai câu hỏi: các giáo viên mới vào nghề trải qua những loại cảm xúc nào trong những tình huống chính trị vi mô khó khăn, và họ đã sử dụng những loại hành động chính trị nào trong những tình huống như vậy? Tài liệu nghiên cứu bao gồm ba cuộc phỏng vấn tường thuật với một giảng viên đại học mới vào nghề người Việt Nam. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy tầm quan trọng của chính trị vi mô trong trường học như một tổ chức và những cảm xúc hiện diện khi các giáo viên mới vào nghề cố gắng dung hòa giữa chính trị vi mô của trường học với niềm tin của chính họ với tư cách là giáo viên. Cùng với đó, nghiên cứu cũng đóng góp kiến thức về cách các giáo viên mới vào nghề học cách giải quyết các tình huống chính trị vi mô khó khăn thông qua các hành động cụ thể.

Từ khoá: chính trị vi mô, giáo viên mới vào nghề, cảm xúc, hành động chính trị