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The representation of professionalism in native English-speaking teachers recruitment policies: A comparative study of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan

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ABSTRACT: The status of English as a global language has played a significant role in contemporary language education policies across the world. In East Asia, the hegemony of English has been reflected in a number of central governments' policies of recruiting native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to participate in English language education. This paper focuses on the NESTs recruitment policies in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan with the aim of examining how teacher professionalism is represented in these policy discourses and how this conceived teacher professionalism impacts on English teaching and learning in these countries. Through the analysis of policy texts and documents, we argue that teacher professionalism has been assigned a different agenda by the governments who subscribe to "native speaker norms" and legitimise unqualified and inexperienced NESTs in the profession of English language teaching (ELT). These anti-professionalism policies have not achieved the intended consequence of improving students' English proficiency, but have instead resulted in the unintended consequences of damaging the quality of English instruction and jeopardising the professional identity of local non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in these countries. The results reveal an urgent need to evaluate the effectiveness of these NEST recruitment programmes.

KEYWORDS: NESTs, NNESTs, teacher professionalism, language policy, policy analysis

INTRODUCTION

The status of English as a global language and its cultural-political consequences have been extensively discussed in the field of English language teaching (ELT) (Block & Cameron, 2002). Since English holds such a strong position in the era of globalisation, one of the main driving forces for the study of contemporary language policy is that English has become a significant factor while making language education policies around the world (Spolsky, 2004). Consequently, the policy discourse of language education inevitably gravitates toward the role of English in various national contexts (Bamgbose, 2003). In a number of Asian countries, the overwhelming hegemony of English is obvious and the role of English as a global language has a substantial impact on language education policies (Nunan, 2003). In Japan, for example, foreign language has traditionally referred only to English (Kubota, 2002). In Taiwan, English is the only compulsory foreign language at different levels of schooling in the education system (Chern, 2002). In Korea, English is the most valuable foreign language to students and has been playing a unique role as the major second language to be learnt in the nation's language policy (Jeon, 2009).

As for Hong Kong, it is the only place within China where English is legally endorsed as one of the official languages, with the other being Mandarin (Lu, 2005). These four countries rely heavily on international trade for their economic growth and have been actively responding to the increasing demands of globalisation by making extensive efforts to improve the English proficiency of their citizens through national language education policies. One of the most influential policies is the programme of recruiting native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to participate in English language education in public schools, including the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) in Japan, the English Programme in Korea (EPIK) in Korea, the Native English-speaking Teacher Scheme (NET Scheme) in Hong Kong, and the Foreign English Teacher Recruitment Project (FETRP) in Taiwan. These four programmes all aim at recruiting NESTs from certain native English-speaking countries but adopt different perspectives, designs and administrative frameworks. The designs and content of these programmes reveal the conceived professionalism of English teachers within these governments. In this paper, we focus on these four NEST recruitment programmes and examine how teacher professionalism is represented in these policy documents, as well as how this conceived teacher professionalism impacts on NNESTs in these countries.

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM: GLOBAL TREND AND LOCAL FOCUS

Teacher professionalism has been a long-standing issue in the field of education. Nowadays, few would question the notion that teaching is and should be regarded as a profession. Cultivating teacher professionalism through well-designed teacher training programmes (National Institute of Education, 2009), defining or identifying teacher professionalism (Fwu & Wang, 2002), and continuing professional development in schools (Salleh, 2008) are all significant trends in the teaching profession. Although there is no straightforward definition of teacher professionalism (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012), various works have attempted to identify the characteristics and qualities of teaching professionals (Evans, 2008; Malm, 2009). There is no single and consistent definition of teacher professionalism because the definition needs to reflect local socio-cultural circumstances. Therefore, different countries may define it in various ways with some common trends or themes such as the possession of professional knowledge, a professional attitude and autonomy (Wu, 2010; Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). Besides this contextual nature, another common understanding of teacher professionalism is to acknowledge the importance of it.

In the literature, teacher professionalism is often referred to as knowing how to teach effectively because teaching performance is heavily influenced by pedagogical knowledge. Acquiring pedagogical knowledge through professional training represents an essential part of teacher professionalism. Hence, professionalism needs to be cultivated through well-designed or accredited teacher training programmes. Teachers with adequate training and certification perform better than those who have received only short-term or no training (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Malm, 2009). In the early 1990s, there were doubts raised on whether ELT professionals were considered to be less well-trained compared to other professionals like doctors or lawyers (Maley, 1992). However, the discourse has changed in recent years with the trend of emphasising teacher professionalism. As Farmer (2006, p. 160) indicates, “professionalism is widely thought to be desirable in ELT”. Moreover, there are

research findings arguing for the importance of professional training and experience to developing competent English language teachers (Wong, 2009). Also, the ten-dimensional standard framework was developed as an instrument to evaluate and reflect professionalism among ELT teachers by Walker (2011). All these recent developments suggest that ELT teachers, just as professionals in any other profession, need to demonstrate their professionalism.

In addition to the global trend, it is also useful to understand the local conceptualisation of teacher professionalism in these four countries. In Taiwan, the professional qualities of teachers are identified as follows (Wu, 2010, p. 106):

1. Professional knowledge: it covers the understanding of theories on education, curriculum and teaching materials and students' learning and development.
2. Professional competence: it refers to pedagogy, curriculum planning and implementation, assessment, counselling and communication skills.
3. Professional attitude.
4. Personality.
5. Expert knowledge in the subject.

From the above, it is obvious that the first three attributes of a teacher are related to professionalism while subject knowledge comes the last. In Hong Kong, the teaching profession is perceived by teachers as ideally possessing “professional knowledge, employing appropriate teaching methods to deal with students with different needs and helping students to develop their value systems” (Lai & Lo, 2007, p. 63). In Korea, teacher professionalism is explicitly linked to the “autonomy” of teachers in their professional knowledge and attitude (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). In Japan, Masataka (2006) argues that the professionalism of English teachers is in danger if the Japanese government focuses only on language testing results rather than professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise. To sum up, a similar rhetorical trend exists in the discourse of professionalism in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan. Teachers' professional knowledge and pedagogical competence are as important as subject knowledge. In the ELT profession, the proper training to equip English teachers with professional knowledge and pedagogical competence that are related to English teaching should be prioritised together with their proficiency in English language.

LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING: ISSUES AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The field of language policy and planning (LPP) has been less explored in applied linguistics (Baldauf, 2002). However, as Tollefson (2002, p. 421) points out, there is a “recent revival of LPP”, with LPP situated in the broader social context and being viewed as a social process instead of being considered as an aspect of national development. Some main concerns of contemporary LPP research may include: language and national identity (Blommaert, 2006), the impact of global migrant flows on languages (Tollefson, 2002), English as a global language (Ferguson, 2006), foreign language policies in education (Spolsky & Lambert, 2006) and the language rights of minority groups (Spolsky, 2004). However, there are no studies examining language policy from the angle of teacher professionalism and its impact on the

professionalism of NNESTs. Therefore, this study may serve to fill the gap in current LPP studies, especially in the East Asian context.

Although there is an increasing interest in LPP, as Spolsky and Lambert (2006) indicate, the discussion of applicable methodology and framework of LPP is still expanding. Ricento (2006), for example, lists five methods to conduct LPP research. These include historical, ethnographic, linguistic, geolinguistic and psychosociological methods. Another method, comparative studies, is mentioned by Baldauf (2002).

However, based on our research interest and the nature of this study, we cannot fully employ the above-mentioned methods. Since LPP is a field with a “multidisciplinary nature” (Baldauf, 2002, p. 394), we decided to use the method from general policy analysis to conduct a comparative study on language policy, focusing on “outcome issues” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 55) of the NEST recruitment policies in these four countries. As Rivzi and Lingard (2010) propose, there are various dimensions of contemporary policy analysis, from contextual and textual issues to implementation and outcomes issues. One aspect of policy outcome analysis is to examine the intended and unintended consequence of policies (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). For data collection and analytical techniques, we applied a document analysis, which is a common analytical approach in policy study (Alexander, 2013; Heck, 2004). The data used in this study was sourced from both printed and online policy documents.

NESTS IN THE FOUR RECRUITMENT POLICIES

Rationales for recruiting NESTs

The policies of recruiting NESTs in these four countries share similar but not identical rationales. The JET Programme does not have the sole aim of improving the foreign language proficiency of Japanese students and can be seen as a consequence of an explicit political strategy to promote international relationships. The programme was started in 1987 by local authorities in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). It was started with the purpose of enhancing internationalisation in Japan by promoting mutual understanding between Japan and other countries. Hence, the programme is based on intensifying foreign language education in Japan and upon promoting international exchange at the local level through fostering ties between Japanese youth and JET Programme participants (CLAIR, 1997).

In Korea, the EPIK, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education, was launched as part of the educational reform under the slogan of “reinforcing foreign language education” and “reinforcing globalisation education” (EPIK, 2011). According to Ha-Tae Yun, the president of the National Institute for International Education, the goals of the EPIK are to improve the English-speaking abilities of students and teachers in Korea, to develop cultural exchanges, and to reform English teaching methodologies in Korea (EPIK, 2011). Thus, the EPIK can be seen as a policy response to

globalisation and the ever-increasing importance of English in the age of information and technology.

As to the NET Scheme in Hong Kong, it was initiated mainly because of a high level of dissatisfaction with students' English proficiency and an insufficient number of competent, local English teachers (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1995). In Taiwan, the FETRP was introduced in accordance with the Taiwanese government's six-year, national development plan – Challenge 2008, whose major goals include upgrading the English proficiency of the Taiwanese. Through the FETRP, the Taiwanese government wishes to reach out to the world and boost Taiwan's competitiveness and youngsters' English proficiency (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003). Despite the different rationales of these programmes, one common aim is to improve the English proficiency of the youth in these countries.

Roles of NESTs

In these four programmes, NESTs are expected to play multiple roles. In the JET Programme, the most significant role of NESTs is Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), whose major duties are assisting Japanese teachers in English language classrooms and in their professional development (JET Programme, 2011). The recruited ALTs are also encouraged to conduct team teaching with local Japanese English teachers (MEXT, 2001). About one-third of foreign-language activities at elementary schools are guided by ALTs recruited through the programme (MEXT, 2003). After 2005, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) started to employ ALTs as full-time teachers in Japanese schools (Honma & Takeshita, 2005).

Under the EPIK in Korea, recruited NESTs are called English Language Instructors (ELIs). According to their qualifications and experience, ELIs are divided into five levels. The major duties of ELIs include conducting English conversation classes for Korean teachers and students, preparing and developing ELT materials, and joint-teaching with Korean English teachers (EPIK, 2011). Similar to Korea, all NESTs under the NET Scheme in Hong Kong are assigned to five different categories, based on their qualifications and experience. The main duties of NESTs are: undertaking teaching duties, developing curriculum and teaching materials, and supporting professional development of local English teachers (Education Bureau, 2011). There are also experienced local English teachers to partner with NESTs in the schools. Likewise, NESTs recruited through the FETRP in Taiwan are expected to teach English, conduct team teaching, compile ELT materials, and offer training to local English teachers (MOE, 2003). Even though there are differences in the roles of the NESTs in these four programmes, there are two common responsibilities: NESTs have to conduct team teaching with local non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and provide professional development for NNESTs.

Recruitment criteria

The JET Programme requires applicants to hold a bachelor degree in any field. Applicants also need to possess excellent linguistics skills, be under 40 years old, and show interest in Japan and its culture. Applicants are not required to have teaching qualifications and experience (JET Programme, 2011). In Korea, the EPIK

participants must be citizens of countries where English is the primary language of communication and hold bachelor degrees. Applicants also must have the ability and willingness to adapt to Korean culture (EPIK, 2011). Like the JET Programme, there is no requirement for EPIK participants to have teaching qualifications or experience, but the EPIK pay-scale rewards those who have qualifications and experience in language teaching. For the NET Scheme applicants in Hong Kong, they need to be native English speakers (NESSs) or possess native-speaker competence in English. Preference is given to those with teaching experience. Appointment to the programme is subject to various factors, such as applicants' majors in universities and English teaching certifications (Education Bureau, 2011). In Taiwan, the FETRP applicants must be NESSs who hold bachelor degrees, with teaching certificates from their home countries and possess basic skills in Mandarin. Professional training in linguistics-related fields and previous teaching experience are desirable, although they are not compulsory (MOE, 2003).

Among these four programmes, the most important common criterion is that applicants have to be NESSs who hold bachelor degrees. Having an intercultural background or experience is emphasised in programmes like the JET and the EPIK, but is not an eligibility criterion in Hong Kong and Taiwan, although the latter seeks NESSs with basic Mandarin skills. Teaching certificates are not required in the JET and the EPIK, and are not the first priority in the NET Scheme. This is a phenomenon worth noticing. The cause of this phenomenon might be the difficulty in retaining and recruiting qualified NESSs. The MOE Taiwan, for example, could not recruit enough qualified NESSs, so it scaled down the target from 1,000 to around 500 annually. However, this target still could not be achieved. The lack of success in recruiting qualified NESSs resulted in the MOE considering hiring NESSs without teaching qualifications and experience:

Our goal to have at least one foreign English teacher in each of the 3,300 elementary and secondary schools has met with some difficulties. We are discussing the possibility of recruiting foreigners with education degrees, but who do not have teaching certificates. (The former Minister of Education Tu Cheng-Sheng, cited in Mo, 2005)

The difficulty in recruitment encountered by the MOE Taiwan shows that NESSs with professional training and experience are not necessarily interested in coming to Asia, where they might face various issues such as team-teaching with local NNESTs and cross-cultural adjustment (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Ohtani, 2010).

Where are NESTs from?

In Japan, the JET Programme participants were exclusively recruited from six native English-speaking countries, including USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland before 1989. After 1989, the programme was gradually expanded to include applicants from other countries such as France, Germany and Russia. Despite this, as high as 93% of JET participants were from the six English-speaking countries (JET Programme, 2011). The EPIK only recruits NESTs from seven native English-speaking countries, including USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and South Africa. The NET Scheme in Hong Kong also aims to recruit NESTs from native English-speaking countries but does not exclude applicants of other nationalities (Education Bureau, 2011). In Taiwan, the FETRP only recruits NESTs

from USA, UK, Canada, and Australia (Huang, 2003). Overall, in terms of the countries from where NESTs are recruited, Hong Kong is the most flexible, while Taiwan is the strictest.

DISCUSSION: THE CONCEIVED PROFESSIONALISM IN NEST POLICIES AND ITS IMPACT

In this section, we first discuss the agency of these governments in promoting “native speaker norms” (Kirkpatrick, 2006) and adopting the ideology of native speakers as ideal English teachers regardless of their qualifications and experience in these NEST recruitment policies. We then situate this conceived teacher professionalism in the contemporary discourse of ELT professionalism. By doing so, we argue that teacher professionalism has been assigned a different agenda by the governments’ subscription to native-speaker norms and the legitimisation of unqualified and inexperienced native speakers in the ELT profession, which devalue the local NNESTs in these countries. In the later part of this section, we discuss the impact of these anti-professionalism policies on English teaching and learning in these countries, arguing that these policies have not achieved the intended consequence of improving students’ English proficiency, but have instead caused the unintended consequences of damaging the quality of English instruction and jeopardising the professional identity of local NNESTs in these countries.

The subscription to “native-speaker norms*” and NESTs-NNESTs dichotomy**

The analysis of NEST recruitment policies in these four countries reveals a prevailing subscription to “native-speaker norms” (Kirkpatrick, 2006) among these governments. The ideology of NESTs as superior teachers in theories and practices of ELT (Pennycook, 1998) is readily adopted by these governments and materialised in the NEST recruitment policies. For example, in the JET Programme, a document sent by the MEXT to elementary school teachers states, “The ALT, *as a native speaker*, is a source of authentic English” (MEXT, 2001, p.137, italics added by the authors). In Taiwan, according to the *Report on the FETRP* submitted by the MOE to the Legislation Yuan, it is claimed that NESTs will be able to provide “standard pronunciation” in English teaching (MOE, 2003). Also in Korea, as the EPIK was expanded to a “one NEST per school” scale, along with the nation’s Five Year Plan for English Education Revitalization, NESTs are described as teachers who can provide students with “a more authentic English environment” (Jeon, 2009). In the case of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong, it is stated in the *Education Commission Report* that the recruitment of NESTs can increase students’ exposure to “Standard English” (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1995, p. 53). These messages highlight the governments’ subscription to linguistic capital that NESTs are native speakers of very limited and specific varieties of English, or so-called “Inner Circle” countries (Kachru, 1985). The subscription to native-speaker norms explicitly shows the impact of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992a) in these governments’ policies.

These NEST recruitment policies aim to recruit NESTs to introduce “authentic” and “Standard” English to students. These governments, however, are not aware that the concept of “native speaker” has actually been called into serious questioning in ELT, because of the ambiguity in the concept itself (Ahn, 2011; Moussu & Llorca, 2008).

The first recorded use of “native speaker” was by Bloomfield: “The first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language” (quoted in Davies, 1991). Native speakers are also perceived as individuals who share a number of non-developmental characteristics such as a subconscious knowledge of rules, an intuitive grasp of meanings, the ability to communicate within social settings, a range of language skills, and creativity of language use (Stern, 1983). Based on Stern’s definition, Johnson and Johnson (1998) add on the identification with a language community, and Davies (1996) further adds the ability to produce fluent discourse, the knowledge of differences between their own speech and that of the “standard” form of the language, and the ability to interpret and translate into the first language (L1) of which she or he is a native speaker. The various definitions of “native speaker” make this concept “rich in ambiguity” (Davies, 2002, p. 44). In essence, the native/non-native issue is controversial and debatable from either a social or linguistic perspective (Medgyes, 1992).

Like the problematic definition of “native speaker”, there is also an unresolved issue underlying the concept of “NESTs”. Although the governments of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan take on a geographic perspective, the debate on “who are NESTs?” reveals the complexity of this construct. The labels NESTs and NNESTs and the rigid distinction between the labels have caused great concern and have been attacked for their untenable positions (see, for example, Davies, 2002; Kachru, 1992; McKay, 2002; Medgyes, 1994). This dichotomy is criticised for being a social construction rather than a linguistically based parameter. Language speakers’ own ideological stances toward their linguistic identities should be more significant than the label they are given by others (Higgins, 2003; McKay, 2002).

In particular, what has lain beneath the label of NNESTs are attitudinal problems, with NNESTs deemed as less worthy users of English (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). The dichotomy is unsatisfactory because it “oversimplifies the complex realities of individuals’ language backgrounds, and because it defines NNESTs in terms of what they lack, rather than what they possess” (Andrews, 2007, p. 221). The NESTs-NNESTs dichotomy is thus power-driven and identity-laden (Davies, 2002), and has been widely rejected as it sets up barriers to success for English learners or teachers who speak a variety of English that is different from the “Standard English” of Inner Circle countries such as Britain or the United States (Norton, 1997). The geographic perspective that these governments have been taking for convenience in recruiting NESTs is problematic given the complexity and ambiguity of the term “NESTs” itself.

The legitimisation of unqualified and inexperienced NESTs

Through examining the eligibility criteria of NESTs in these four programmes, it shows that teaching qualifications and experience are not required or prioritised. Consequently, nearly 90% of JET participants are not certified teachers (Carless, 2004), and most of the NESTs do not have teaching experience or content knowledge of English language (Ohtani, 2010). Despite MEXT’s launching its new *Guideline for the Course of Study* in 2008 (MEXT, 2009), the guideline does not provide further opportunities to employ qualified NESTs in the public education system (Hashimoto, 2011). Also, in Korea, only 26% of the EPIK participants hold teaching certificates (Ahn, Park & Ono, 1998). The NET Scheme in Hong Kong requires applicants to hold teaching certificates, but does not consider it as the first priority. In Taiwan, as

fore-mentioned, although it was initially stated in the FETRP that applicants need to possess teaching certificates, the government has been lax in enforcing this criterion due to the difficulty in recruiting qualified NESTs.

These governments' adoption of the notion of native English speakers as ideal English teachers regardless of their professional training and education background, as we argue, is against the global trend of seeing qualifications and experience as the central component in the cultivation of teacher professionalism. As teaching professionals, teachers first require a deep and full understanding of the subject area, an understanding that is characterised by knowledge of many concepts and their relationships (Calderhead, 1996). Moreover, teachers need to have knowledge in pedagogical aspects (Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard & De Vries, 1997), which is a significant distinction between the teaching profession and other professions. In other words, teachers should ideally be a combination of subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactic experts (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000). This distinct feature of teaching professionals is also applied to English language teachers. It is of paramount importance for English language teachers to develop language awareness, pedagogical skills and cultural competence in order to remove communication barriers and bridge the teacher-student cultural rift (Li, 2005).

For language policy-makers in these countries, accordingly, it is worth asking to what extent it is appropriate to count native speaker-hood as a premier qualification for English-language teaching, without considering professional training and experience (Braine, 1999; Ferguson, 2006). As advocated by Widdowson (1994): "English and English teaching are proper to the extent that they are appropriate, not to the extent that they are appropriated" (p. 389). Being unaware of this, there has often been the danger of "an automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone, without taking into consideration the criteria of cultural, social and pedagogic appropriacy" (Seidlhofer, 1996, p. 69). Without placing an emphasis on NESTs' qualifications and experience, these governments have sacrificed teacher professionalism by yielding to the myth that untrained and inexperienced NESTs can still be competent teachers. Since professionalism such as expertise, linguistic awareness, and cultural awareness should be prerequisites for being a competent English teacher, it is questionable whether NESTs who are unqualified and inexperienced have adequate teaching competence to safeguard the quality of ELT in these countries. After all, being a native English speaker does not guarantee that the individual knows the language well enough and is able to teach it (Li, 2005).

These anti-professionalism language policies, we argue, are high stakes because of these governments' untenable assumption that untrained and inexperienced NESTs are capable of doing a better job than qualified and experienced NNESTs. As Phillipson (1992b) argues: "The insight that teachers have into language learning processes, and into the structure and usage of a language, and their capacity to analyse and explain language, definitely have to be learnt" (p. 14). Not to mention that under these programmes, most of the unqualified and inexperienced NESTs are expected to perform various professional tasks, such as delivering English instruction, training local NNESTs who are already qualified teachers, developing teaching materials, and contributing to curriculum development. It is problematic to expect untrained,

inexperienced and culturally unprepared NESTs to take such huge responsibility (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Jeon, 2009).

Hence, it is crucial for these governments to realise that for English teachers, there are many challenges of a more difficult kind to overcome in the English classroom than just holding the status of a native English speaker. English teachers must be familiar, not only with teaching materials, but even more with sociocultural, socio-political and other ecological realities in order to be effective. As warned by Anchimbe (2006): “Language teaching is not independent of societal and sociocultural reality” (p. 11). For any ELT exercise to be successful, it has to incorporate various aspects from the given society rather than from the native. This may explain why a number of studies have revealed that despite English learners and NNESTs themselves perceiving the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs differently, they recognise that experience and professionalism (qualifications) are more important than native-language backgrounds (Cheung, 2002; Liang, 2002; Llurda, 2005; Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Moussu & Llurda, 2008).

Impact: The intended and unintended consequences of the policies

To examine the effectiveness of a policy discourse, it is necessary to look at both intended and unintended consequences (Ball, 2006). In this discussion, we examine the intended and unintended consequences of the NEST recruitment policies in these four countries. Through an extensive review on the policy documents and literature, we argue that not only have these policies not yet been proven to achieve the intended consequence, they have caused unintended consequences in the ELT contexts in these countries.

In terms of the intended consequence, these governments have been making great efforts at recruiting NESTs from Inner Circle countries to raise students’ English proficiency. This is the clearly stated intended consequence of these policies. Though these NEST recruitment policies are claimed to be language improvement initiatives, there is so far no comprehensive government-initiated evaluation or empirical evidence showing the effectiveness of these policies with regard to students’ language improvement in these countries (Jeon & Lee, 2006; Lai, 1999; Chang, Chern & Lo, 2008). In Japan, for example, the JET Programme was criticised by the Government Revitalization Unit because the programme itself had not changed since it was established in 1987, and no comprehensive review had ever been undertaken. The Unit also questioned the effectiveness of having unqualified NESTs in the programme in improving Japanese students’ English proficiency (Hashimoto, 2011). In Hong Kong, the only government-initiated evaluation on the NET Scheme is the *NET Scheme for Primary School Meta-Analysis Report*, but it only presents self-reported data from certain selected schools without actually assessing students’ language improvement (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2006). In other words, the benefits NESTs might bring to English language education in schools in these East Asian countries have not yet been delineated (Butler, 2004).

Not only is there a lack of evidence showing the effectiveness of these policies on students’ language improvement, these policies have had adverse effects on the quality of English instruction in the ELT classrooms and the professional identity of local NNESTs in these countries. First, according to the *JET Programme Participants*

Expectation Report, nearly 90% of the NESTs who participated in the programme felt unprepared or qualified for teaching in the style that the JET Programme demands. Also, many of them reported that they were barely involved in lesson planning before they entered the classroom (AJET, 2010). Moreover, despite the expectation that recruited NESTs conduct team teaching with Japanese English teachers, their lack of pedagogical qualifications and language barriers became a source of misunderstanding between them and local Japanese English teachers, thereby creating difficulties in working together (Kan, 2002; Ohtani, 2010). In Korea, many EPIK participants also acknowledged that they did not know the curriculum requirements, nor did they check their students' textbooks when conducting English lessons (Jeon, 2009). Such ill preparation for instruction, insufficient planning for lessons, ineffective communication between teaching partners, and little understanding about curriculum requirements all have a negative impact on the quality of English teaching and learning (Ohtani, 2010).

Second, these NEST recruitment policies have greatly reshaped the professional identity of local NNESTs in these countries, and inevitably raised the long-lasting but controversial debate in the ELT profession: "Who is worth more, the native or the non-native?" (Medgyes, 1994). First of all, for most NNESTs in these countries, they must pass the English proficiency test, complete English teacher-training courses, and go through teaching practicums and a series of reviews so that they can become qualified English teachers in public schools. In addition, under these NEST recruitment programmes, the salary of NESTs is significantly higher than local NNESTs. For example, the starting salary for Japanese primary teachers is US\$24,469 annually (OECD, 2006), about 30% less than that of the JET Programme participants. In Taiwan, the starting salary of elementary school teachers is also about one third less than the FETRP participants, who have bachelor degrees but no teaching experience (MOE, 2011b). By applying such double standards to the recruitment practice, these governments seem to imply that despite lacking in professional training and experience, NESTs are more trusted professionals and valued more than local NNESTs.

Consequently, one socio-political implication of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong is that local NNESTs are increasingly looked upon as less competent, less knowledgeable resources, and their contribution as less valuable (Lee, 2005). They were found to perceive the recruitment of NESTs as a slur on themselves, as if NESTs were being brought in to show them "how to teach English" (Boyle, 1997, p. 173). The superior pay-scale and the recognition of English competence given to the recruited NESTs made them feel that they had automatically been "marginalised" by the government. This marginalisation demoralises them and diminishes the merits of local English teachers (Lung, 1999, p. 8). In Korea, many local NNESTs were also found to see NESTs as a threat to their confidence in their own English competence and greet the arrival of NESTs as "their own worst nightmare" (Niederhauser, 1995, p. 4). In Japan, criticisms levelled by local NNESTs were shown in the teachers' description of the recruited NESTs as "not properly trained to lead the class, has no experience as an educator, has little in-depth knowledge of the English knowledge, and is not responsible for the class" (Tajino & Tajino, 2000, p. 5).

The presence of NESTs has also caused many Japanese English teachers to be concerned about their values, roles and competence as teachers (Goldberg, 1995;

Tajino & Tajino, 2000). For example, only a negligible number of Japanese English teachers saw NESTs as equal partners (Mahoney, 2004; McConnell, 2000). In the classrooms, most of Japanese English teachers were relegated to just being “interpreters” (Tajino & Tajino, 2000) and were often marginalised during English activities (Butler, 2005; Matsukawa, 2001). The scenario is not much different in Korea. Many Korean English teachers were only present in the classrooms to help out with discipline, classroom management or communication problems without getting involved in any teaching activities (Carless, 2002). In Taiwan, likewise, many local English teachers, administrators, and education bureau officials have expressed their concerns about the discrepancy in the salaries between NESTs and local English teachers, qualifications (professional training and experiences) of NESTs, and the inequality of power relationships in the classroom (the role of local teachers as translators) which have resulted from the NEST recruitment policy (Chang et al., 2008).

Teachers’ professional identities influence the ways teachers think and teach (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004), and the formation of teachers’ identities is related to the discourses and contexts within which teachers operate (Clarke, 2009; Miller Marsh, 2003). With these governments’ policies of recruiting unqualified, inexperienced NESTs and paying them a higher salary, NNESTs in these countries face a very different policy discourse in terms of what constitutes good teaching practice and what is valued and what can lead to being an ELT professional, as compared to the discourse of ELT professionalism regarding the essence of a competent English teacher. These competing discourses would affect NNESTs’ professional identity construction because of the confrontation they encounter in the process of resolving these contradictory discourses that they are exposed to in the government policies and in the ELT profession simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, it has been noted that many governments and ministries of education have framed policies and implemented them in the language-learning area without adequately considering the impact of these policies on students and teachers (Nunan, 2003; Szulc-Kurpaska, 1996). By examining the NEST recruitment programmes in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, we present two major arguments in this paper. First, teacher professionalism has been assigned a different agenda by these governments, as reflected in the governments’ subscription to native-speaker norms and legitimisation of unqualified and inexperienced NESTs in the ELT profession. Second, due to the conceived teacher professionalism, these policies have not achieved the intended consequence (that is, a positive impact on students’ language improvement), but have caused unintended consequences (that is, a negative impact on the quality of English instruction and the professional identity of local NNESTs).

Teacher professionalism is essential in ELT profession, and it should not be sacrificed in any English language policies, given whatever purposes or means, if the ultimate goal is to help English learners learn better. After all, without professional training and adequate experience, how can we expect teachers, either NESTs or NNESTs, to work professionally in ELT? Considering the significant impact of the NEST

recruitment policies on both teachers and students in these countries, we suggest that for future research, what would be meaningful is to look for solid evidence showing the effectiveness of these programmes on students' English proficiency. After all this is the most important aim of these programmes in the first place. Also, the evaluation of these policies should extend beyond students' learning outcomes. Longitudinal, multi-dimensional (skills and dispositions), and cross-sectional (students, teachers and educational authorities) evaluations will provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness of these policies in a more holistic manner in these specific ELT contexts.

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