


NEW FACULTY MEMBERS IN KUWAITI UNIVERSITIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 15 August 2023</p> <p>Accepted 10 November 2023</p>	<p>Objective: To explore the challenges and opportunities faced by new faculty members in Kuwaiti universities and to identify factors contributing to their successful adaptation and integration.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Kuwait; Faculty; University; Teaching Experience; Expectations; Organizational Environment.</p>	<p>Theoretical reference: This study is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of teaching experience, organizational environment, and expectation alignment, focusing on their roles in faculty integration and adaptation.</p>
	<p>Method: A qualitative research methodology was employed, involving a detailed examination of the experiences and perspectives of new faculty members in Kuwaiti universities.</p>
	<p>Results and Conclusion: The research identified three key domains—teaching experience, organizational environment, and expectations—as crucial predictors of successful faculty integration. These domains interact through teaching experience alignment, expectation-ecosystem integration, and pedagogical-ecological synergy, facilitating a quick start and effective integration of new faculty members.</p>
	<p>Research implications: The findings offer valuable insights into the onboarding processes of universities, highlighting the importance of aligning teaching experience with organizational expectations and environments to promote effective faculty integration.</p>
	<p>Originality/Value: This study contributes to the understanding of faculty onboarding by specifically focusing on Kuwaiti universities, thereby providing a unique perspective on the integration challenges and opportunities in a specific cultural and academic context.</p>
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NOVOS MEMBROS DO CORPO DOCENTE NAS UNIVERSIDADES DO KUWAIT: DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES

RESUMO

Objetivo: Explorar os desafios e oportunidades enfrentados pelos novos membros do corpo docente nas universidades do Kuwait e identificar os fatores que contribuem para o sucesso da sua adaptação e integração.

Referencial teórico: Este estudo está fundamentado nos referenciais teóricos da experiência docente, do ambiente organizacional e do alinhamento de expectativas, com foco em seus papéis na integração e adaptação docente.

Método: Foi empregada uma metodologia de pesquisa qualitativa, envolvendo um exame detalhado das experiências e perspectivas de novos docentes em universidades do Kuwait.

Resultados e conclusão: A pesquisa identificou três domínios principais – experiência docente, ambiente organizacional e expectativas – como preditores cruciais de uma integração docente bem-sucedida. Esses domínios interagem por meio do alinhamento da experiência de ensino, da integração entre expectativas e ecossistemas e da

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sinergia pedagógico-ecológica, facilitando um início rápido e uma integração eficaz de novos membros do corpo docente.

Implicações de pesquisa: As descobertas oferecem informações valiosas sobre os processos de integração das universidades, destacando a importância de alinhar a experiência de ensino com as expectativas e ambientes organizacionais para promover a integração eficaz do corpo docente.

Originalidade/Valor: Este estudo contribui para a compreensão da integração do corpo docente, concentrando-se especificamente nas universidades do Kuwait, proporcionando assim uma perspectiva única sobre os desafios e oportunidades de integração num contexto cultural e acadêmico específico.

Palavras-chave: Kuwait, Corpo Docente, Universidade, Experiência de Ensino, Expectativas, Ambiente Organizacional.

NUEVOS MIEMBROS DEL CUERPO DOCENTE EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES KUWAITÍES: DESAFÍOS Y OPORTUNIDADES

RESUMEN

Objetivo: explorar los desafíos y oportunidades que enfrentan los nuevos miembros del profesorado en las universidades kuwaitíes e identificar los factores que contribuyen a su adaptación e integración exitosa.

Referencia teórica: Este estudio se basa en los marcos teóricos de la experiencia docente, el entorno organizacional y la alineación de expectativas, enfocándose en sus roles en la integración y adaptación del profesorado.

Método: Se empleó una metodología de investigación cualitativa, que implicó un examen detallado de las experiencias y perspectivas de los nuevos profesores de las universidades kuwaitíes.

Resultados y conclusión: La investigación identificó tres dominios clave (experiencia docente, entorno organizacional y expectativas) como predictores cruciales de una integración docente exitosa. Estos dominios interactúan a través de la alineación de la experiencia docente, la integración de las expectativas y el ecosistema y la sinergia pedagógico-ecológica, lo que facilita un inicio rápido y una integración efectiva de los nuevos miembros del profesorado.

Implicaciones de la investigación: Los hallazgos ofrecen información valiosa sobre los procesos de incorporación de las universidades, destacando la importancia de alinear la experiencia docente con las expectativas y entornos organizacionales para promover la integración efectiva del profesorado.

Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio contribuye a la comprensión de la incorporación de profesores al centrarse específicamente en las universidades kuwaitíes, proporcionando así una perspectiva única sobre los desafíos y oportunidades de integración en un contexto cultural y académico específico.

Palabras clave: Kuwait, Facultad, Universidad, Experiencia Docente, Expectativas, Entorno Organizacional.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to enhance new faculty integration through the identification of the most effective methods that should be employed by faculty, organizations, and other related parties. This practitioner article will identify the challenges confronting new faculty in a university in Kuwait, while also highlighting the available opportunities, and will attempt to provide an effective framework for the quick integration of new faculty members in order to answer the research question, “What are the challenges and opportunities experienced by new faculty members in universities in Kuwait, and how can they be addressed?”

The research objectives of this article are:

- To understand the challenges facing new faculty members in Kuwaiti universities.

- To learn how new faculty members in Kuwaiti universities can cope with challenges and seize opportunities.
- To provide a model to help universities and new faculty accelerate the integration process.

This article is highly demanded as both universities and new faculty members in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries may benefit from the proposed model as a guide to ease new-faculty integration in the first semester and avoid organizational shortcomings.

THEORETICAL REFERENTIAL

Practitioner Articles and New Faculty

New faculty

The existing literature varies widely on the definition of “new faculty.” For the purpose of this research three criteria were used to define faculty as “new”: 1) educational degree, 2) experience, and 3) location.

1) Educational Degree: Saito (2013) stated that starting a new job is a challenge that is faced by novice educators and a major contributor to their new multi-faced identity. The transition from one identity to the next is often difficult.

University faculty are categorized into three clusters. Faculty holding Ph.D. degrees usually teach university courses at a more sophisticated level, covering a wider abroad compared to faculty who hold only lower academic degrees, A Ph.D. holder can teach in graduate-level degree programs such as doctoral and master’s programs, as well as undergraduate degree programs, while faculty holding lower academic degrees, like master’s and bachelor’s degrees, or postgraduate diplomas are ineligible to teach in graduate programs. The academic level of students taught may constitute a challenge and exposure to a new domain.

From an administrative perspective, teaching loads and the amount of administrative work required differ based on faculty education level. Faculty with lower degrees are required to perform more administrative work than their Ph.D.-holding peers and are not allowed to make major changes to the course content, learning outcomes, or material set by Ph.D. faculty. Additionally, they are ineligible for high-level positions at universities such as a dean or department head, as they lack educational support and preferences.

Faculty with Ph.Ds have a higher emphasis on academic scholarship and research rather than teaching and are recognized by their academic institutions as both researchers and teachers,

instead of only teachers. Furthermore, faculty with lower academic degrees often must teach a wider variety of subjects in different programs rather than having a focus on and deep understanding of specific subjects.

2) *Experience* can be measured using the parameters of teaching period, field or domain, and career shifts/intervals. (Lucas et al., 2011).

Faculty are considered new if they have no experience teaching higher education students in academia or have intermittent academic experience with 2–3-year intervals in between experiences (Stupnisky et al., 2015). Faculty dislike being labeled as new after three years or have not taught higher education students for at least 2–3 years. Finally, faculty who are changing their field of study—for example, having taught science but now teaching business—are also considered to be “new.”

3) *Changing location* is the third and final criterion used to define faculty as new.

Faculty leaving their comfort zone to teach in other countries, regions, and cultures may encounter different levels of value tolerance within their new environment. By understating cultural similarities and differences between the place and the people, new faculty may overcome obstacles and avoid misunderstandings.

Some cultures and countries are less inclusive, tolerant, or forgiving towards values contrary to their own. For many new faculty, becoming acclimated to their new location forces them to prioritize and identify what is important and to understand the surrounding circumstances and how to respond to them. In many cases, it can be frustrating and may come with heavy consequences if one is not vigilant and alert.

Challenges, opportunities, and support systems

Brent et al. (1999) identified the most important challenge faced by faculty as balancing between teaching, research, and other professional and personal activities.

Perry et al. (2019) argued that joining academia is accompanied by a wide variety of challenges and barriers not limited to the development of a new identity (through the courses and subjects taught) and students’ perceptions, especially if faculty formerly in lower positions, such as instructors, have been promoted to higher position such as assistant professor.

In addition, challenges derived from different views and convictions may severely affect peer collaboration and cooperation in academia. As a result, the fondness for teaching is the leading motivator for new faculty members in this new profession.

There are three main domains in which new faculty may encounter challenges.

1) Teaching Experience

a) *Change in available resources:* New faculty educated using traditional methods and learning systems currently must adapt to and adopt new resources to enhance and enrich both their learning experiences and teaching style. They need to introduce new educational materials and teaching mechanisms, through the use of diverse learning tools to accommodate student populations that are continuously exposed to new technology, changes in information, and current lifestyles. In order to do so, faculty must strengthen their abilities through training, continuous learning, upgrading their skill sets (e.g., artificial intelligence (AI) presentation, negotiation, etc.), and including more up-to-date educational content.

b) *Intellectual stimulants:* Well-structured lectures alone do not symbolize excellent teaching. New faculty are expected to use creative techniques and intellectual stimulants that effectively engage students and support learning, such as AI and interactive media classwork.

c) *Curriculum development:* New faculty are forced to frequently revise previously established curriculum, learning objectives, and course content to account for changes in resources and the use of intellectual stimulants, developing new courses, programs, and subjects.

2) Organizational Environment

a) *Collegiality:* The ability of faculty to navigate institutional politics and establish positive relationships with colleagues in a new organizational environment is also important (Stupnisky, Weaver-Hightower, & Kartoshkin, 2015). Collegiality can be observed through a number of parameters such as collaboration, trust, mentoring, networking, politics, and degree of support.

According to Boice (1991), establishing relationships and not feeling lonely were not exclusive for new faculty but also for returning faculty as well. In addition, negative perceptions from senior faculty, and the perceived dependability of new faculty incite both senior and new faculty to find new positions in different universities where support is abundant from both management and colleagues.

b) *University internal policies, procedures, transparency, and retaliatory actions:* These factors may severely hinder the new faculty's ability to adapt, as well as their creativity and ability to excel, especially if these policies and procedures do not take

into account the minuscule differences between administrative staff and academic faculty.

Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) found that new faculty may face numerous challenges including tension, reduced support, and feeling incapable of enduring academic and behavioral matters in the classrooms. Middleton et al. (2022) noted that, if conducted properly, the orientation process may have positive effects on the morale, engagement, connectivity, and productivity of new faculty. There is a great need for innovative orientation processes, especially those accompanied by transparent rules and regulations.

3) Expectations

Based on a study of 6,882 new faculty members at 80 institutions, clarity of expectation can positively predict the interrelationship between new and senior faculty (Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011). While universities expect faculty to present excellence in teaching students and comply with institution rules and requests, faculty themselves are more concerned about research, job security, and potential for growth. Any changes made by the university should not affect the rights of faculty unless it is to empower or further increase those rights.

According to James and Shammass (2018), the academic success of students is connected to a virtuous teacher–student connection. This connection can be weakened by faculty anxiety and inventive methods are necessary to lessen its consequences (Lewallen et al., 2003).

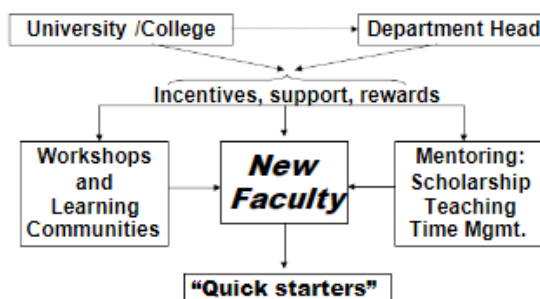
Gayles et al. (2008) discovered that universities frequently qualify new faculty based on their responses to diverse sources of stress that they may encounter including work-life balance, anticipations from them as teachers, anticipations from them as actors in society, and stereotyping.

Proper mentoring and support programs at the institutional level are highly recommended. Boice's (1991) work highlighted the importance of being proactive in aiding new faculty facing new challenges rather than letting them learn from trial and error. Garrison (2005) also found that effective orientation can help increase faculty integration.

According to Merchant (2022), opportunities can be cultivated by working in an interdisciplinary environment that is characterized by a wide variety of experiences, backgrounds, ideas, personalities, and values, all of which are sources of knowledge that can be utilized. Faculty should seek beyond their own departments and universities and need to operate collectively with scholars from diverse disciplines.

Herman and Bailey (1991) explained that some faculty are not suited to teaching in foreign countries. Considerable criteria influence this ability, such as patience, flexibility, and adaptability, in addition to attitudes and behaviors.

Figure 1. Elements of a New Faculty Support Program



Source: (Brent et al., 1999)

As illustrated in Figure 1, to be classified as quick starters, the new faculty must have access to various programs, initiatives, benefits, training, and mentorship directed by the academic institution and the department head. (Van et al., 2023) found creative performance is influenced by ethical leadership, and this highlights the importance of leadership in the academic institutions.

According to Coleman et al. (2006), new faculty have the challenge of maintaining a balance between teaching and research, while also developing an understanding of the system of the academic establishment. To overcome such challenges, Perry et al. (2019) proposed institutional support strategies that would allow for the quick integration of new faculty through mentorship, acclimation processes, peer support, and opportunities for professional development.

Faculty in the Gulf Region

Teaching experience

Sonleitner and Khelifa (2005) studied the university expectations of Western-educated faculty in the Arabian Gulf at universities providing American-style education. The challenges these faculty members encountered included cultural differences with Arab Muslims and the multitude of rules related to interactions between genders.

The majority of learners at Gulf universities have attended public schools in which English is not the primary language of instruction, in contrast to private schools where instruction is usually given in English. Sonleitner and Khelifa added that learners from public

schools are more likely to feel the teacher has definitive power and that questions are not permitted. The primary studying methodology learned in public schools is the memorizing of facts, which may add to students' concerns about making errors and means they may not be familiar with teamwork. Such learners expect their instructors to provide detailed guidance. When facing academically weak learners, the majority of faculty will revise their teaching plans to accommodate learners' levels and abilities.

Location and organizational environment

New faculty members' expectations of organizational support can be subdivided into the recruitment stage, orientation stage, and working stage. In the *recruitment stage*, extensive and preemptive organizational support is needed. Despite information they may have already acquired, new faculty at this stage remain oblivious to the specifics that may drastically impair their acclimatization.

The focus in this stage should be addressing new faculty's expectations of position and rank; living requirements related to housing, transportation, and the ability to conduct financial transactions; and legal and government requirements regarding visas, family, validation of certificates through university guidance, availability of legal and governmental representatives, facilitation, follow-up, clarifications, and advice.

In the *orientation stage*, the focus of the university should be on providing thorough and clear communication of its expectations for new faculty, procedures, policies, and bylaws, ensuring representatives are available for immediate guidance and support regarding legal and governmental requirements, in addition to explaining, responsibilities, resource distribution, and management among new faculty.

The final stage is the *working stage*, during which the focus is on the students and teaching. A balance must be found between meeting personal expectations and needs, teaching excellence, and faculty compliance with organizational rules and regulations.

METHODOLOGY

The grounded theory research approach was adopted for this study, with the intent of studying the challenges and opportunities faced by new faculty members in Kuwaiti Universities.

The research design was based on the subjectivism research ontology and an interpretivism research philosophy, using an inductive, mono-method qualitative research

approach is inductive. The research strategy is an interview, and the time horizon is cross-sectional. With a sample size of twelve new faculty members, interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached, in order to enable the researchers to develop a robust theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

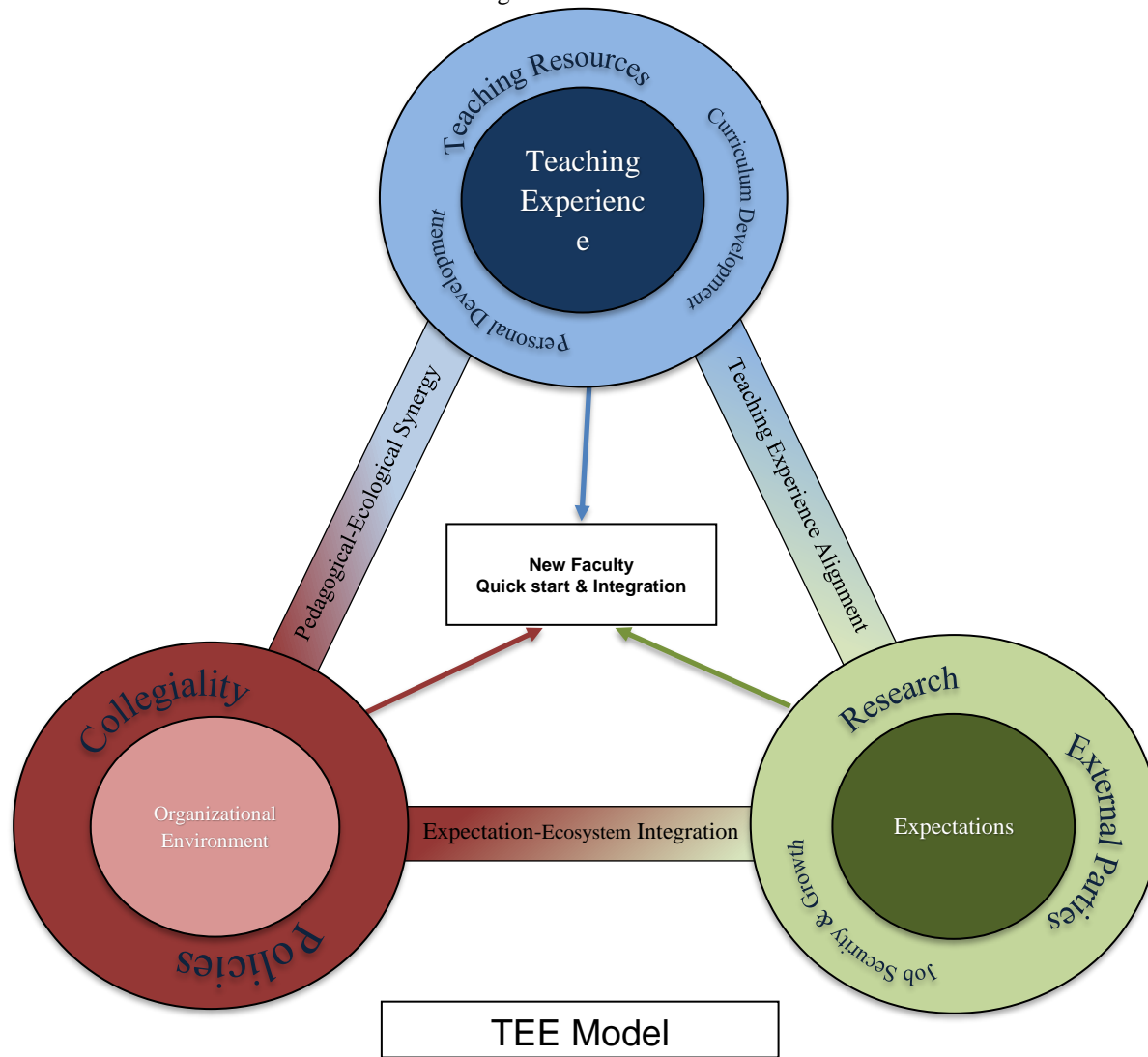
Proposed Model

The "**TEE Model**," representing the interconnected domains of teaching experience, organizational environment, and expectations, is proposed to help faculty overcome the challenges and benefit from associated opportunities as new faculty in Kuwaiti universities.

The three interactions included in this model are:

- 1) **Teaching Experience Alignment:** This interaction focuses on how teaching experiences align with expectations within the organizational environment.
- 2) **Expectation-Ecosystem Integration:** This interaction explores the integration of expectations and the organizational environment and how they collectively shape the educational ecosystem.
- 3) **Pedagogical–Ecological Synergy:** This interaction emphasizes the collaborative synergy between teaching practices (pedagogy) and the broader ecological dynamics of the educational environment.

Figure 2. TEE Model



Source: Maalouf G.¹ & Jallad I.²

Teaching experience alignment

Faculty may face numerous challenges throughout the critical period between start and integration. Overcoming these challenges can be facilitated by *teaching experience alignment*, defined as the two-way interactions between teaching resources and research, as well as external parties (learners, university, peers).

The need for teaching resources motivates faculty to deeply research different platforms (e.g., libraries, books, online sources, and materials provided by the university), in order to diversify their teaching methods and enrich student experiences. Research helps faculty develop new resources that will improve the teaching experience. External parties who are exposed to these resources may contribute to the improvement of both resources and research through

continuous interactions and feedback, as well as through suggestions of new teaching tools and/or methods that may enhance the teaching experience.

Curriculum development, or revolutionizing curriculum and introducing changes, to maintain up-to-date core concepts, material, and theories with a focus on the employability of lessons in terms of learner skills, knowledge, and abilities is crucial. Acquiring additional knowledge mandates curriculum development, as faculty are required to incorporate said in their teaching materials and methods to share it with learners and peers who will evaluate it and assess its applicability to the changes in the external environment.

External parties (e.g., learners, university, peers) are the main source of information, guidance, and influence required in curriculum development to be able to create a robust program that responds to the latest market trends.

A positive competitive environment among peers often leads to personal development—such as achieving certifications in PMP, CMA, SHRM, etc., or attending and participating in the development of training courses—in addition to the indirect contributions and development gained by new faculty toward research. New opportunities for personal development can be explored by doing additional research that covers extensive topics, benchmarking, case studies, reports, market requirements, and diverse practitioner articles. (Khawaldeh, 2023) studied the impact of training on improving the performance of workers in Maan's Directorate of Education. This researcher found that there is a moderate effect of overall training on the improvement of worker's performance due to the trainer's dimension, but the other dimensions of quality training and its duration do not impact worker's performance.

Expectation–ecosystem integration

Requirements for housing, transportation, and the ability to conduct financial transactions may threaten the delicate balance between job security and organizational compliance if faculty are unable to satisfy their basic needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Pichère & Cadiat, 2015). The speed of new faculty integration is highly influenced by the university's ability to support the legal and governmental requirements necessary to obtain visas, driver's licenses, contracts, certificate validation, etc.

These actions will influence new faculty's perceptions of the university as an environment with high levels of job security and commitment, encouraging them to grow in their careers. Clear and transparent policies will create an environment of trust and excellence inside the organization, new faculty members who accept change and perceive it as a source of

empowerment and opportunities for growth and prosperity rather than a limitation to creativity and imagination will have an outstanding level of job security h.

Pedagogical–ecological synergy

New faculty members in Kuwait will join a unique educational setting characterized by learners coming from various public and private schools with dissimilar levels of English. In addition, they should interact with senior faculty to promote their integration, and to understand instructional content and examination styles that correspond to learner attributes. New faculty members must have the capability to manage their time dedicated to teaching, research, and service while responding to various tasks burdens.

Based on previous research (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017) and the data collected in this study, the job security and growth of new faculty members may severely be affected by a lack of organizational support, inexperience at efficiently handling personal and professional development, and difficulty handling learner behavioral problems due to limited teaching resources.

In contrast to the limited systemic policy support for subsidies and programmatic funding that other countries offer (Darling-Hammond, 2016), Kuwaiti universities and students are supported and funded by the government which creates significant pressure to meet cultural and governmental expectations in order to continue receiving funds.

CONCLUSION

Summary

This practitioner article strived to deliver a model for prospective faculty members entering Kuwaiti universities to expedite their quick integration into the institution. Finding harmony between teaching, research, and strategy is crucial if the new faculty members are to thrive and will be fruitful in their individual evolution and learning.

This study analyzed the challenges facing new faculty members in Kuwaiti universities. The findings focused on the interconnected domains of teaching experience, organizational environment, and expectations, with the three interactions of teaching experience alignment, expectation–ecosystem integration, and pedagogical–ecological synergy.

Teaching materials must be amended to respond to the diverse English levels of learners and construct more effective teaching sessions. Lodging, carrier, and other elements of daily life were examined in the earlier content resulting in constant examination and adoption of the

most delinquent norms that will secure an honorable lifestyle for the new faculty and promote their professional development.

Conclusion

New faculty members in Kuwaiti universities will face many challenges, as well as opportunities that will require continued support to make their tenure as successful as possible.

This study found that the three domains of teaching experience, organizational environment, and expectations predict and contribute to the quick integration of new faculty through the interactions of teaching experience alignment, expectation-ecosystem integration, and pedagogical-ecological synergy.

Teaching experience alignment can be observed through the effects of interactions between teaching resources, curriculum, and personal development with expectations for research, external parties (learners, peers, and the educational institution), and job security and growth.

Expectation–ecosystem integration can be described as the actions taken by both peers and the organization to push new faculty members to address their ambitions of research, job security, and growth, assimilating to external parties (learners, peers, and educational institution) expectations, policies, and rules.

Finally, pedagogical–ecological synergy results from links created between teaching resources, curriculum, and personal development with peer support and organizational commitment to its obligations, presented through transparent policies and procedures.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy and decision-makers

Within the domains mentioned in this model, policy and decision-makers should take into consideration these interactions and incorporate them into organizational procedures and policies to expedite the integration of new faculty members in their educational institutions.

They should also start training and orientation programs, create dedicated days for personal development initiatives, and facilitate the personal, legal, and living requirements of new faculty members by providing specialized personnel and support. In addition, research should be encouraged through the allocation of funds and cooperation with external institutions to sponsor new faculty research papers and books.

Recommendations for future researchers

Future researchers should concentrate on knowledge management and new faculty members' experiences, in addition to the role of technology in enabling integration, mainly in the first year at an institution.

Testing this model in other Gulf countries and addressing additions or changes to this model to accommodate the particularity of each country's culture is also of interest.

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