Chapter 7
Reflecting and Adapting to an Academic Workplace Before and After the Lockdown in Greek–Speaking Cyprus:
Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are required to constantly adapt and respond to the needs of society, both economic and social, including the current pandemic situation. The traditional representation of university as an educational side is being challenged leading to the inclusion of the practitioner side, emphasising on the need for business education. In this context, the present study examines how academics reflect and adapt to an HEI and enhance their workplace literacy and work-related practices inside and outside the foreign language classroom. The participants were 36 academics of all ranks involving part- and full-timers working in a private English-speaking HEI. The findings indicate that participants could need more support with the subject area that is English, and an extended access to the shared repertoire of their communities, which may strengthen their connections with other academics and reduce high job demands, resulting in better adaptation to new workplaces.

INTRODUCTION

The recognition that learning occurs within the workplace and is associated with organisational and individual development is not new (Bond & Garrick, 1999). According to Stevens et al. (2001), workplaces are structured to maximise learning processes and provide opportunities for development. Indeed, workplace learning may contribute to the development of enterprises and individuals through enhancing capabilities to identify and act upon new opportunities.

However, it is argued that learning opportunities are not evenly distributed among employees due to several reasons including the status of work, personal relations between employees, and employment status (Billett, 2001). The reasons for restricted access to learning at work can be applied to academic workplaces (Valsan & Sproule, 2008). As competition between higher education institutions (HEIs) is intensified due to reduced governmental funding and increased marketisation of institutions, academics experience more challenges, which are associated with limited job security and equality of opportunities (Santos & van Phu, 2019).

An increased number of temporary contracts (Valsan & Sproule, 2008) make academics move between institutions (James & Lokhtina, 2018) within and beyond higher education (HE). However, academics who experience these transitions may face unfamiliar working environments (Boyd, 2010) due to new job roles and work tasks that are likely to be closely aligned with formal groupings such as departments and/or schools (Harland & Staniforth, 2003). Responding to these challenges, workplace learning practices should focus on higher level of literacies in order to develop academics' ability to learn, adapt, and change quickly and efficiently to meet the current demands of the workplace whether the academics are native or non-native speakers of English. Moreover, with internationalisation, many academics and students can move across Europe, which implies that the English language is the medium for communication. The Cypriot-Greek (CG) context could be an example reflecting this situation, which suggests that HEIs compete to attract academics and students. However, given that English is not the L1 (first language), this creates new challenges.

The application of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) to the existing trends in academic workplaces opens up an interesting line of investigation in this respect. Currently, the JD-R model is perceived as one of the leading models, proposing that high job demands may cause job strain, and that job resources may serve as motivating factors reducing the pressure of high job demands (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). The JD-R model can help to shed light on job resources that academics should have in order to enhance their performance inside and outside the second language (L2) classroom, which refers to the classroom context in which English is used as an L2. This is because English language skills, which have been acquired for academic purposes (e.g., teaching, researching), do not necessarily guarantee successful use of L2 English when teaching for business education (e.g., for a specific discipline) or communicating with colleagues outside the classroom. The development of new faculty and new teaching methods are among the major challenges that business education faces (Kozminski, 2011) to remain relevant in the current fast-changing and knowledge-driven business landscape (Avolio et al., 2019). As a result, the focus of this study is on the extent to which HEIs support academics regarding the development of their literacy skills and competencies as part of their learning practices resulting in adaptation to new workplaces and how the academics perceive this support.

The chapter will consider the existing and required initiatives, including training and material design, which could be implemented by private HEIs in order to respond to the expectations relating to open communication, mutual learning and knowledge exchange between academics. The rationale for

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