Chapter 17
An Examination of International School Onboarding Programs:
Pre-Arrival, Arrival, and Transition Phases

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will examine the pre-arrival, arrival and orientation, and transition phases of international school onboarding programs. The elements are the social media group, internet platform, airport protocol, arrival dossier, orientation schedule, events itinerary, and transition partnership. The phases were delineated based on a robust literature review and Klein and Heuser's inform-welcome-guide framework. The elements were created in alignment with the adult learning principles put forth by Knowles et al. and the concept of fulfilling a newcomer's psychological contract. The three phases and seven elements of the international school onboarding program are substantiated and moderately substantiated using the Delphi method. International school leaders, educators, and coordinators can use the findings to create a site-specific onboarding program.

THE THREE PHASES AND SEVEN ELEMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ONBOARDING

Effective onboarding in international schools is an essential endeavor that holds significant importance for several reasons. First, it catalyzes a seamless transition for teachers arriving from different countries and integrating into the new host country. Providing essential information, resources, and support helps new teachers adapt and reduces relocation challenges and uncertainty. Onboarding cultivates a sense of comfort and confidence in new teachers (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chong et al., 2020; DeBode et al., 2017; Yu & Davis, 2016); it serves as the initial step toward teacher retention (Saks & Gruman, 2012).

Second, effective onboarding aligns new teachers with the culture of new school. Introducing newcomers to the mission, vision, educational philosophy, core values and goals of the school facilitates integration into the school's educational approach, curriculum, and teaching methodologies. This alignment contributes to a cohesive educational experience for students and fosters a shared sense of unity among staff members (Berger, 1979; Klein et al., 2015).

Third, effective onboarding promotes positive relationships among new teachers, administrators, and existing staff members (Berger, 1979; Klein et al., 2015). Through collaborative endeavors, social events, and transition partnerships, onboarding programs establish a sense of belonging and nurture a support network for new teachers. Cultivating these relationships from the outset can favorably influence a school's culture and foster a sense of value, connection, and support, promoting job satisfaction and overall well-being. By providing ample support, equipping new teachers with the necessary tools, and integrating them into the school community, onboarding can lead to a sense of loyalty. Early organizational commitment can occur if the program includes professional development, mentorship, and growth opportunities (Cable et al., 2013; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Klein et al., 2015).

Lastly, effective onboarding establishes clear lines of communication by familiarizing new teachers with communication channels, administrative procedures, and school policies (Klein & Polin, 2012). This communication infrastructure enhances collaboration and teamwork among staff members, facilitating the exchange of ideas, sharing best practices, and implementing consistent teaching approaches.

What is an effective onboarding program? With so many international schools in varying contexts, it is challenging to determine what is universally effective. One measure to evaluate the effectiveness of an onboarding program could be to evaluate a new teacher's perception of the degree to which they feel aligned with the vision of the school and the degree to which they feel they can teach with fidelity on the first day of classes. Before it is appropriate to measure the degree to which an onboarding program is effective, we need to determine the phases and elements necessary to build a site-specific onboarding program. This chapter provides three phases and seven elements substantiated or moderately substantiated through a group of diverse international school educational leaders.

International school onboarding programs range in fidelity from completely lacking (Halicioglu, 2015) to highly resilient (Totaro & Wise, 2018). This chapter will provide insight to international school administrators, human resources, and new teacher orientation committees interested in augmenting their current onboarding program or developing a site-specific from the ground up.

In the following sections of this chapter, we will delve into each phase of the onboarding process, highlighting key strategies, activities, and considerations that can enhance the experience for new teachers. By understanding the significance of each phase and implementing targeted elements, administrators can create a site-specific, supportive, and inclusive onboarding program that sets the stage for success.

We will begin by briefly exploring the origins and background of organizational socialization and some of the concepts that intersect with onboarding like Klein and Heuser's (2008) inform-welcome-guide theory (IWG), Knowles et al. (2005) theory of adult learning, expatriate socialization, acculturative stress, and psychological contracts. Then, we will discuss the Delphi method and present the research findings that substantiate the phases and elements of the international school onboarding program. Within the findings, we will discuss the pre-arrival phase, where we introduce digital platforms that provide comprehensive information to incoming teachers and opportunities to acquaint newcomers with one another, returning staff, and administrators. Next, we will discuss the arrival and orientation phase by examining the importance of airport protocols, the arrival dossier, the orientation schedule, and the events itiner-

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