Pedagogical Theory to Classroom Practice: Bridging the Gap

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TESL Ontario Private Sector Committee

- Formed in 2017

- Private sector administrators, teacher trainers

- Mission: To develop a coherent voice and focus for professional development and practice among ESL educators working in private post-secondary institutions

Pedagogical Theory to Classroom Practice: Bridging the Gap

- Novice teachers in private sector institutions

- First post-TESL experience a crucial period (Valeo & Faez, 2013)

- Transition highlights skills gaps (Farrell 2012, 2019; Valeo & Faez, 2013)

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Transitioning to the Classroom: Novice Teachers

Survey for New Instructors

- New instructors with one year or less of experience were invited to complete a survey to share comments about their TESOL/TESL/CELTA training programs, and the start of their teaching careers.

- The survey was completed anonymously and online.

- Teachers were asked 9 open-ended questions.

- Respondents took an average of 14 minutes to complete the survey.

- Although anonymous, individual responses suggested participants came from both TESOL and CELTA programs, working at different institutions.

How ready did you feel to step into a class upon completion of your Teacher-Training Program?

- "Absolutely ready"

- "100%"

- "I didn't feel as ready as I should've been. I felt that I needed more classroom experience."

- "I didn't feel ready at all."

- "Nervous and excited"

- "I spent 6 hours preparing a lesson because I didn't feel I had all the tools to teach my own class."

What were you most nervous about going into your first teaching position?

- Technology
- Remembering names
- Being able to answer students' questions
- Involvement of students
- Not knowing what to do in certain situations
- Lack of confidence about my teaching abilities and competency
- Students thinking I wasn't able to teach them properly
- Teaching in a multicultural environment
- Creating rapport with my students
- Not knowing where to begin

In your first three months of teaching, what were the two or three largest hurdles you had to overcome?

- Grammar questions and instruction

- Second-guessing my assessments

- Efficient lesson planning

- Assigning speaking and writing assignments

- Feeling comfortable in the classroom

- Establishing rapport with students

- Creating materials

How effective was your teacher induction process?

- "I had full support of the staff and was provided with all needed materials for the lessons."

- "Not very effective. There wasn't any training offered. I had to ask to observe a class myself, just to see how things were done."

- "It was not clear at all and very rushed."

- "The teacher induction process was a bit confusing for me. I think this is because it was such a large amount of information given in a short amount of time."

- "It was largely effective in that you were given all the information you needed for a smooth start but the amount of information was overwhelming."

- "I am good at flying by the seat of my pants so I did okay."

Was there anything teaching-related that wasn't covered in your induction?

- Assessment procedures

- Background of students (Why are they here? Where are they from? What unique needs do they have?)

- Rules of conduct in the classroom

  Note: many respondents responded "no" or "n/a" to this question

How would you assess the level of support you received from your Director of Studies/Academic Leadership in your first three months of teaching?

- "Full support"

- "Some support"

- "Excellent"

- "A+ the support was there from day one."

- "The support I received in the form of constructive feedback was great. My Director of Studies appeared very encouraging at all times."

- "I felt a bit like I was thrown in the deep end."

- "I don't know who that is."

What kind of teaching did you mostly do in your first few months of teaching?

- Pre-scheduled supply

- Last-minute supply

- Regular scheduled teaching

How prepared do you feel you were for the non-teaching related responsibilities (e.g. assessing, planning, collaborating with co-workers, etc.)?

- "Not very prepared"

- "I was well prepared"

- "Assessing is my major concern. I feel prepared for all other non-teaching responsibilities."

- "In terms of assessing and planning I would say I was adequately prepared, but more practice was needed."

- "I feel I was much less prepared for the non-teaching related responsibilities than the teaching responsibilities."

Instructor Survey – Final Thoughts

- The level of "readiness" of novice instructors varies greatly from person to person

- Training programs can provide the knowledge and skills required for ESL instructors; however, the induction process is very important to ensure new instructors feel prepared, confident, and a part of the team.

Survey for Academic Administrators

- Teacher Trainers and Academic Administrators were invited to complete a survey to share comments about their experience in training and inducting new teachers.

- The survey was completed anonymously and online

- Trainers & Administrators were asked 6 open-ended questions

- Respondents took an average of 16 minutes to complete the survey.

How well are successful teachers prepared for their non-teaching responsibilities (e.g. assessing, planning, collaborating with co-workers, etc.)?

- "Admin responsibilities can be a hurdle."
- "Poorly. They struggle with this."
- "As well as possible in the circumstances of a short course - you can't expect miracles!"
- "School admin can't really be taught in a teacher training course."
- "Assessing is something they are very unfamiliar with."
- "Generally, they are underprepared."
- "I feel that this is an area of teacher training that is woefully lacking."
- "Many new teachers may be excellent in the classroom but an utter nightmare administratively."

What are the biggest challenges new teachers face in their first teaching position? Why?

- Sudden lack of support / Learning on the fly

- Increased demands on planning time

- Understanding the curriculum & scheduling

- Burning out

- Confidence / "Imposter Syndrome"

- Balancing in-class and administrative responsibilities

- Managing learner needs & expectations & behaviour

- Professionalism / Building connections

To better assist a new teacher's transition, what advice would you give to academic administrators who are responsible for such training (Part I)?

- Institute a mentor / "buddy" system

- Support group / network / 'Homework Club'

- Peer observations

- Regular one-to-one meetings with admin

- Start on a part-time schedule

- Monitor progress through pop-in observations

To better assist a new teacher's transition, what advice would you give to academic administrators who are responsible for such training (Part II)?

- Standardize new teacher training

- Encourage ongoing professional development

- Reflective practitioner (i.e ask questions / learn from mistakes)

- Encourage continual language reflection

- View feedback positively

Are there any skills / areas that you feel current teacher training programs need to improve / add that would help new teachers in their transition?
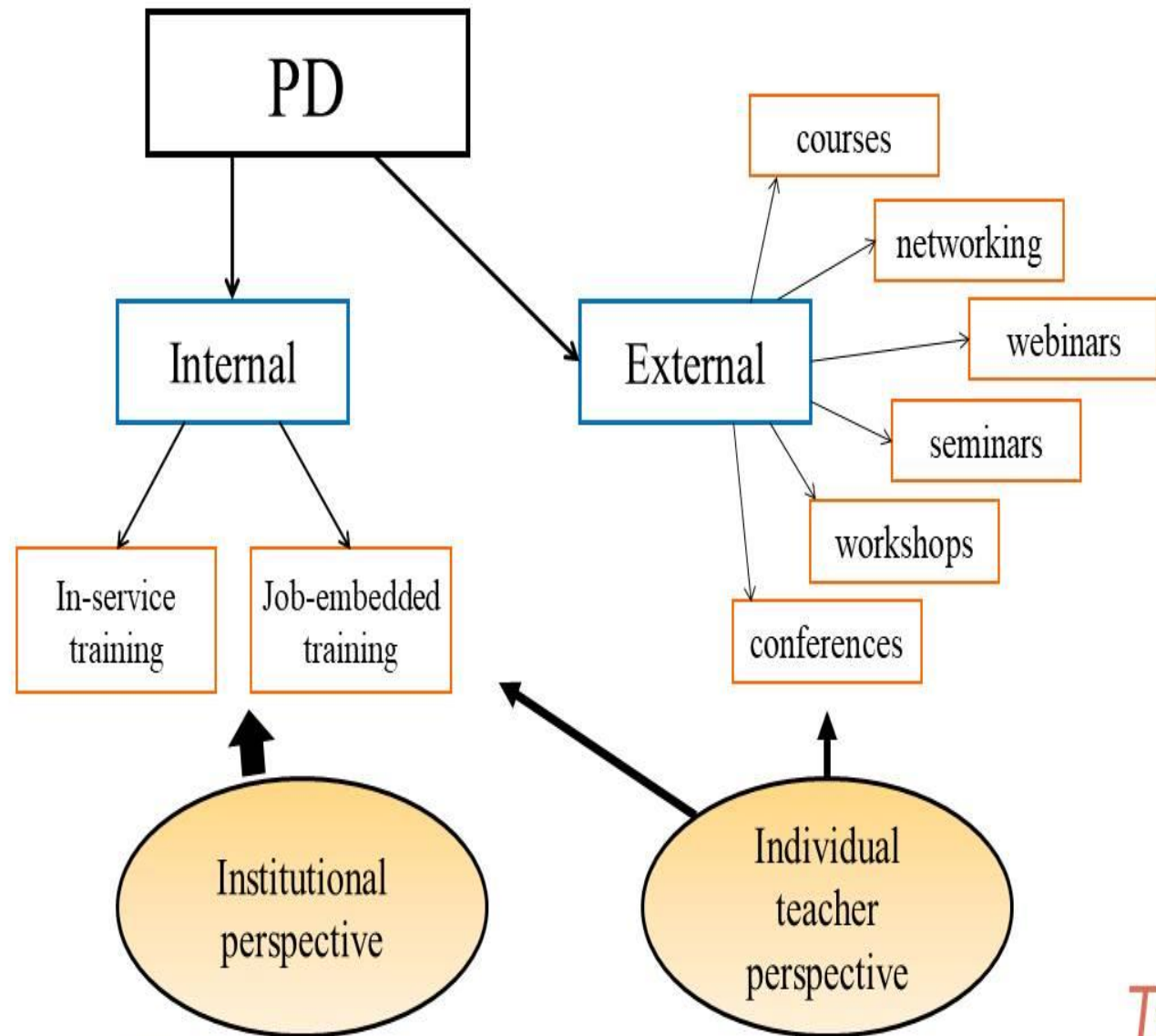
- Emotional / psychological skills

- Professionalism / transferable skills

- Assessing, grammar theory & realistic expectations

- Giving students purposeful tasks / clear aims / depth of feedback

- Practical adaptations of materials

- Collecting / reflecting / archiving

Trainer / Admin Survey – Final Thoughts

- Start slow, provide positive feedback and encourage continuous development to instil the right mindset in new teachers.

- Spending time with new teachers early, through such things as one to ones, observations, P.D., mentoring, etc., can pay off in long run

- Training may need to be tilted more to admin & soft skills

Training & PD at Private Sector Institutions: International Centre for EAP
(ICEAP Toronto)

Professional Development

In education, **professional development** means:

- specialized training
- formal education
- professional learning for administrators, teachers, and other educators

Purpose – *to improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.*

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Types of Professional Development

Challenges That EAP Novice Teachers Experience

Novice Teachers' Opinions

- "Overwhelming and difficult to keep organized with dozens of loose sheets: lesson plans, material, and assignments"
- Assessing writing
- Teaching and assessing pronunciation
- Implementing communicative approach
- Classroom management

Admin Observations

- Approaching lesson plans as a list of activities
- Prior experience (misconceptions)
- Providing feedback (written/oral)
- Teacher-talk time

Challenges that Administrators Experience Planning PD

- No framework

- Identifying the topics

- Finding external guest speakers

- Developing the plan for PD

- Addressing diverse needs of teachers

- Time!

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Research does NOT support PD that:

- Relies on the traditional one-off model

- Focuses only on training teachers in new methods, techniques and behaviors (i.e. top-down model)

- Is not related to teachers' specific contexts and curriculums

- Is episodic and fragmented (e.g. happening once a year)

- Expects teachers to make changes in isolation and without institutional support

- Does not provide sustained teacher learning opportunities

Research supports PD that:

- Deepens teachers' knowledge of content (i.e. KAL - knowledge about the language) and how to teach it to students
- Helps teachers understand how students learn specific content
- Provides opportunities for active, hands on PD
- Invites risk taking and innovation
- Enables teachers to acquire new knowledge (based on research, apply it to practice and reflect on results with colleagues
- Is supported by the institution and links curriculum, assessment, and standards to professional learning
- Is collaborative, collegial, and fosters the development of communities of practice (CoP)
- Is intensive, coherent, and sustained over time
- Is focused and involves lower staff complexity (i.e. specific teaching streams)

The LYE Model & Schedule

Session	Date	Focus
Face-to-face Session #1: *The Noun Phrase and Reading informing Writing*	February 21	Input: Theory, Activity, Teacher Design
Office Hour #1	March 20	Reflection & Feedback
Face-to-face Session #2: *Text-based approach to academic writing: the when, where, and why of sentence types.*	April 21	Input: Theory, Activity, Teacher Design
Office Hour #2	May 22	Reflection & Feedback
Face-to-face Session #3 *Lexical Cohesion in Writing and Informing Spoken Production*	June 22	Input: Theory, Activity, Teacher Design
Office Hour #3	July 22	Reflection & Feedback

What We Do (ICEAP Toronto)

- Training sessions for new hires
- Weekly meetings
- Formative and summative observations
- Course evaluations
- Performance evaluation
- PD workshops
- External PD events
- Academic Committee
- Mentorship program
- Presentations/ workshops

www.edsurge.com

Call for Private Sector Committee Members

- The committee is expanding!

- Looking for experienced administrators and teacher trainers

- 2-year term, 5-6 meetings per year

- Participate in project work with chair and committee members

- For more info, go to:
  https://www.teslontario.org/private-sector-committee-0

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