Teacher Professionalism In Tesol

JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall, University of Maryland Baltimore County [1]

Teaching is life-long learning, or at least it needs to be. No matter how effective our teacher preparation programs, we, as teachers, must be prepared to continue our professional development--through reading and reflection; active participation in workshops, institutes, or conferences; or a variety of coaching and mentoring activities--so that we can continue to meet the incredible challenges that we face on a daily basis in our classrooms.

Teacher Preparation or Pre-service Programs

Recently, TESLJB-L, the employment-oriented segment of the TESL-L list, has been engaged in a heartening discussion of what constitutes an effective pre-service program in TESOL. This discussion has been especially interesting to me as a Co-Director of a Master's Program in TESOL/Bilingual Education, since it confirms much of what I believe to be essential features of a TESOL teacher preparation program. Among the suggested components are:

- Opportunities to construct knowledge and develop an understanding of how to apply that knowledge to the processes of learning and teaching (especially language learning and teaching) through courses in learning theory, first and second language acquisition, cross-cultural communication, and testing and evaluation; and attention to language form and use, through courses in the structure of English, sociolinguistics, and bilingualism.

- Opportunities to develop a deep understanding of the theories behind various approaches to language teaching and structured time throughout the program (not just at the end) to engage in a number of observations and practice teaching assignments to test various, reflect on the process in a prin-

1 The author can be reached at the Department of Education, University of Maryland Baltimore County, 5401 Wilkins Ave., Baltimore, MD 21228-5313, USA. TEL.: (410) 455-2313, FAX: (410) 455-3986, e-mail: crandall@gl.umbc.edu.

cipled manner, and engage in discussion with peers and more experienced teachers about these.

- Opportunities to engage in a number of classroom-based and other teacher research activities and project work that is closely tied to practice which will help develop better decision-making skills and strategies.

- Opportunities to evaluate curriculum and materials, to engage in adaptation of these for various learners, and to create lesson plans, units, and new materials.

- Opportunities to become familiar with and if possible, comfortable with, various types of technology that are frequently used in language teaching and learning, including some familiarity with accessing databases and the Internet.

- Encouragement to engage in ongoing language learning during the program and to keep a language learning diary to document the difficulties, successful learning strategies, and the feelings that accompany the complex and often painful process of learning another language.

One person on the list wrote of the need to address English for Specific Purposes, to which I would suggest the addition of content-based language instruction and attention to World Englishes and English as an International Language. Another noted that programs should also provide "a clear picture of the job market and access to career services, job bulletins, etc." I would add a number of other practical considerations that we address in our program. These include:

- Opportunities for writing conference proposals and time to practice giving conference presentations, with opportunities for feedback from colleagues and peers.

- Explanations of how to identify potential outside funding and some practice in writing proposals to access additional resources.

- Discussion of classroom and program management issues, including conflict resolution and peer mediation, record-

keeping, and a variety of other practical issues that can either lead teachers to remain in teaching or cause them to consider other fields soon after they begin.

- On a more positive note, development of a teaching portfolio, which reflects that teacher's emerging philosophy and gives some examples of the kinds of teaching and learning activities that the teacher has developed to date.

The Need for Continuing Professional Development

What struck me during the discussion, however, was that no matter how effective a pre-service program is, it can only begin--that is, set the direction for--a life-long learning process that will be needed if one is to be an inspired and inspirational English teacher. Teaching is life-long learning, and given the constant changes in the political, social, and educational environments in which we teach, we can only anticipate that the need to continue learning will increase. Who would have thought ten years ago that there would even be an Internet? How much technology for language teaching had even been created when you were studying to be a teacher? Who could have expected the expanding role of English in technology transfer, international commerce, and international communication and the need to not only learn how to teach English for Specific Purposes, but also the need to become familiar with English as an International Language, belonging to no one country or people? Who would have thought that there would be a North American Free Trade Agreement, a European Community, or a Pacific Rim Alliance, in which English--among other languages--would have a role?

How many TESOL professionals thought they were preparing to teach English, only to find that they have become curriculum developers, program administrators, or teacher educators, either formally through workshops, institutes, or courses; or informally, by helping new teachers or sharing insights or "activities that work" with colleagues. Others thought they would be teaching "General English," with access to a number of texts and materials, only to learn that their students needed academic English or specific English tailored to their current or future professional needs and there were no appropriate materials available, leading them to become knowledgeable about business or science so that they could design and teach specific English courses?

A teacher preparation program, no matter how comprehensive, could not possibly foresee all that TESOL professionals will be doing, but it can provide a firm foundation on which teachers can continue to develop their knowledge and skills. If one thinks in terms of the "strategic interaction" model of teaching developed by Robert Di Pietro, our pre-service education programs represent only a beginning--the rehearsal and initial performances--of a teacher's professional development. Ongoing in-service education, in a variety of forms, provides the opportunities for close examination and feedback on those performances that lead to adaptations or revisions which result in learning (Crandall 1994).

Active, creative teachers are engaged in professional development on a continual basis. Every time that teachers change their syllabuses or the texts or materials used in their courses, they are developing their teaching practice. Every time they evaluate new texts or create new materials which are better suited to the needs of their current learners, they are engaged in professional development. Every time teachers chat with colleagues in the teachers' lounge about particular students, particular problems, or particular activities, they are expanding their knowledge. Every time teachers write in their teaching journals, noting particular successful strategies or problems that arose with a particular lesson, that is cause for reflection and growth.

And it is this recognition of the need to keep current, to continue learning--from students, from colleagues, from research, and from ourselves--that characterizes TESOL as a profession and enables us to advance our profession, even when the conditions in which we work, the resources available to us, and the financial rewards may not seem to be comparable to the value of our work or the professionalism with which we undertake it.

Keeping Up To Date as a TESOL Professional

Several years ago, in the second edition of *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, edited by Marianne Celce-Murcia, I outlined some of the traditional ways in which we might accomplish our need for "Keeping Up to Date as an ESL Professional." While that article is limited today, given the growth of the Internet, the world wide web, and interactive teacher conversations conducted by satellite through TESOL or USIA, I think it is still useful to review some of the basic ways in which we might continue to develop as TESOL professionals after we leave our TESOL

preparation programs so that we may "continue to grow as a teacher and to become better informed as an ESL professional." These include:

- Participating in professional associations concerned with the teaching of English or other foreign languages, including attending local, national, or international conferences.
- Subscribing to journals and regularly reading periodicals in the teaching of English and in related fields.
- Placing one's name on mailing lists of major ESL/EFL textbook publishers and information clearinghouses or resource centers.
- Offering to review texts for publishers or journals.
- Serving on textbook selection committees.
- Attending or giving in-service workshops and seminars for teachers.
- Participating in summer institutes or special graduate programs to augment and update expertise.
- Participating in research projects to work with researchers and other professionals who are engaged in analyzing issues relevant to the classroom.
- Working collaboratively with professionals in other fields.

(Crandall 1992, 507)

But the Internet, Tele-TESOL teacher development programs, the World Net interactive conversations sponsored by the United States Information Agency, and a number of other distance learning initiatives have made that chapter in Celce-Murcia's book dated. While these are still important and accessible ways of "keeping up to date as a TESOL professional," they are certainly not an exhaustive list. I would make a number of additions to that list today just from the many technological innovations that are becoming more available to us as teachers. These include:

- Accessing libraries and information clearinghouses around the world through computerized databases and satellite hook-ups.

- Participating in interactive conversations and discussions through electronic lists and mail on the Internet such as TESL-L with its host of specialized sub-lists dealing with K-12 issues, teacher education, or employment, or other lists such as FLAC-L (foreign language across the curriculum) or CLA (cooperative learning).

- Taking part in distance learning opportunities such as those provided by TESOL (Tele-TESOL), the United States Information Agency (World Net), and other organizations.

The Internet in particular--for those who are fortunate enough to have access to it--offers a rich source of professional development. The world wide web pages introduce institutions and announce programs and the interactive lists offer an opportunity to participate in wide-ranging professional conversations on issues of methodology, program design, research, employment conditions, and teacher education and to receive almost instantaneous answers to nearly any professional question that might be posed. What makes the Internet so powerful is the way in which it facilitates interaction and interchange, encouraging us to collaboratively construct new knowledge.

The Importance of Collaboration in Professional Development

For those who are not technologically connected, however, opportunities for interaction and collaboration in research, discussion, reflection and growth abound, and they can be even more powerful and empowering than what the new technology makes available. What I want to do now is to focus on some of the innovative ways in which teachers and other professionals are continuing to learn and to develop their teaching knowledge and skills, and in doing so, discuss the value of collaboration in teacher development. If learning is social and interactive, then we need opportunities to co-construct knowledge by accessing what we already know and then analyzing it, researching it, sharing it with others, and building new knowledge in the process.

The following examples of collaboration--some of which are interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and/or international in scope--involve teachers reflecting on their assumptions and expectations about teaching and learning and the relationships between the two and researching ways in which they can enhance both that teaching and learning. They include:

- Collaboration among teachers in the same school, at several schools, or in a variety of contexts in the same community.
- Collaboration among teachers from different disciplines, perhaps ESL and content area teachers or ESL and FL teachers.
- Collaboration between student or novice teachers and experienced teachers.
- Collaboration among teachers and students.
- Collaboration among schools and universities.

Throughout the discussion, I will be pointing to the importance of teacher research and reflection as a principal component of the professional development process. That teacher research might focus on a challenge in the classroom, a particular student or group of students, a new approach or technique, an assessment issue, or a variety of concerns that become more salient as we progress in our learning as teachers. It may involve participation in an informal group or in a more structured program, such as a graduate course or after-school program.

Teacher Collaboration

There is substantial evidence that effective schools--that is, schools where the learning of both students and teachers is greater--teachers collaborate. When teachers collaborate, not surprisingly, they generate ideas that are more effective than what would emerge from teachers working alone. Teacher collaboration, then, is not only beneficial for teacher development; it is also beneficial for learners and schools. While there are many ways in which teachers can and do collaborate, let me focus on two: peer observation and teacher inquiry groups.

Peer Observation

Teachers can learn a great deal by observing other teachers. Fortunately, observation has long been a part of pre-service teacher education. Sadly, observation often ceases after one becomes a teacher, although it is likely to be even more valuable to us after we have acquired some teaching experience. Perhaps that is because observation of teachers is too often linked with supervision and evaluation, and thus not something a teacher welcomes. But making observation a positive experience can result in teachers agreeing to, or even welcoming, their peers. For example, at one of the campuses of the City University of New York, both novice and experienced ESL teachers are invited to observe "master" teachers during specially designated open-door periods.

Observations are also useful when they involve teachers who teach the same students, but in different subject areas. Frequently, these observations emerge naturally and result in informal exchanges of information about specific students, specific instructional strategies or goals, or about appropriate curriculum and materials to use. Observations should also be structured into many in-service programs, but on a voluntary basis. Usually, when I work with a school, a district, or a university, I include peer observations as part of the learning process. For example, in a school in which there are a number of students learning English as a second or additional language who are also enrolled in content courses where English is a medium of instruction, I try to pair the ESL and content teachers who share similar students and then give them a structured observation instrument to use in their visits to each others' classes to focus their attention and help avoid statements of judgment or evaluation about the teaching in the classrooms. The goal is not to evaluate teachers, but to learn from them. These observation instruments ask the teachers to notice what is on the walls and the chalkboard, what kinds of activities the teachers and students are engaged in, what types of materials are used, and what problems the students seem to be having with the class. Teachers are also asked to note one thing that they learned in the observation which they plan to apply when they go back to their classes. These observations are then followed by opportunities for the two teachers to share their insights and to co-plan at least some portion of their upcoming lessons.

For example, in a recent course designed to give secondary school teachers a chance to learn more about helping English language learners to succeed in school (*Strategies for Working with Linguistically and Culturally*

Diverse Secondary Students), I paired ESL and other content teachers in peer observation and feedback activities which served as a basis for developing more collaborative teaching and learning. While ESL teachers learned a great deal about the difficulties confronting biology, history and advanced mathematics teachers who have English language learners in class, those other content area teachers learned ways to accommodate the learners in their observations of ESL classes. As one teacher expressed it in her journal, in the observation she saw "ESOL teachers...using so many good teaching practices--cooperative activities, review of basic concepts, interpersonal affirmations of students, multisensory approaches, repetition and drill...that regular teachers can take note of to improve their lessons."

Teacher development, program development, and student learning are all enhanced by opportunities for peer observation, feedback, and where appropriate, peer coaching.

Teacher Inquiry Groups

While workshops and institutes provide an excellent forum for introducing new strategies or materials or even approaches to teaching, educators have long questioned whether these alone can lead to changes in professional practice. Needed, as well, are extended opportunities for teachers to come together to reflect on their experiences, share their concerns, and design small research or inquiry projects which will help illuminate the directions they might take in meeting those concerns. A variety of terms have been used to describe these groups of reflective practitioners who gather with colleagues from the same school or in various schools or programs in the same region to share questions, concerns, opinions, insights, and ideas about instruction.

Sometimes these inquiry groups are limited to educators who teach the same subject. Other times, they include teachers from across the curriculum. Sometimes, the groups include only teachers from a particular level (elementary, secondary, tertiary, or adult); other times, they cross levels. Sometimes the groups are only made up of experienced teachers; other times, they include student or novice teachers as well.

Let me describe some of these to you. For some time now, a group of adult literacy practitioners (the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Research Project) has been meeting in Philadelphia to read, research, reflect, and dis-

cuss educational research and issues related to their own adult literacy practice (Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann 1993). They have become a research community whose focus is on their own practice. Using this as a model, the state of Virginia has created an Adult Educators' Research Network, which includes a number of adult ESL teachers and administrators, to encourage these educators to develop inquiry projects with the guidance of locally trained facilitators (Drennon 1994).

My university (UMBC) has recently added a special "Experienced Teacher" strand in our Master's Program, which has proven to be particularly attractive to teachers whose major commitment is to teaching, not to moving into administration. At the core of the program are courses in Teacher Research and Reflection. They have formed an active teacher research community which regularly presents at conferences and institutes.

Another new inquiry group consists of teachers and student teachers at one elementary school who meet after school to investigate various issues related to the goals which the teachers and administrators have set for the school. The inquiry groups are facilitated by a teacher educator from a nearby university who is particularly interested in helping teachers to research their own practice. At their first meetings, teachers write about some of the issues or practices about which they want to learn more; they then narrow these to present to the group; finally, with the assistance of the group, they decide on one which they will actually study during the semester with readings, discussion, implementation in the classroom, and ongoing evaluation of the effects. What makes this community of teacher inquiry groups so interesting is that it affects the whole school and also brings student teachers in to collaborate with more experienced teachers. The student teachers are likely to learn from their more experienced colleagues about some of the issues and concerns that face even experienced colleagues; in turn, their more experienced colleagues will likely broaden their range and flexibility as they learn from the student teachers who are likely to have more current theoretical knowledge and better access to research and resources. With the presence of ESL teachers in these groups, some of that research is likely to be related to English language learners.

Bringing Students (And the Community) into the Collaboration

Too often, students are absent from teacher education. Yet, if we are to be effective as teachers, we must provide a forum for students to voice

their concerns. While many teachers do that in an ongoing way in their classrooms, there are many other ways to learn from students and to make them partners in the teaching, research, and learning process. Let me describe some in which I have been involved in the past year.

I am currently directing an effort focused on helping secondary schools to improve the academic achievement of language minority students through more attention to academic English language and literacy and more appropriate and effective academic instruction across the curriculum. As part of this effort, we have been offering graduate courses for both experienced teachers and graduate students preparing to teach ESL. (One of those courses is described above in connection with peer observation and reflection.) In the most recent course, we decided to include student informants in the actual teaching of the course and to require all who participated in the course to engage in a semester-long case study of one of the students.

Throughout the semester, then, each teacher worked intensively with a student who needed extra attention; became more knowledgeable about that student's background, prior educational experiences, and current educational expectations and needs; and used that information to help inform appropriate educational practice for this (and other similar) students. Many were students in need of extra teacher attention, so student participation was valuable to both teacher and student. As part of that attention, the teachers engaged in a dialogue journal with the students through which they came to better understand the student and also to assist that student with written English development. The teachers also audiotaped one of sessions they had with the student and transcribed a small portion of it, so that they could analyze the student's language and get a better understanding of the systematicity of that student's English.

One highlight of the course was an autophotography project designed by one of the teachers in the class (Morano-Ender) who had tried it with her students and reported on its success at the 1995 TESOL Conference in Long Beach (Morano-Ender and Ender 1995). In the autophotography project, students engaged in a kind of ethnographic research. They were given a small, inexpensive camera and were asked to use it to photograph people, places, and things that helped answer the question "Who am I?" They then wrote captions under those pictures and put them together in a kind of photoautobiographical book, which helped their teachers and other students to

better understand them, hopefully leading as well to more effective English language literacy development.

A follow-up activity brought these students to the class on the night that teachers and community members discussed the socio-cultural, educational, linguistic, and other profiles of their countries. Offered perhaps their first opportunity to share their educational experiences and expectations, the students became quite eloquent in describing their former schools and contrasting these with American classrooms. In the process, teachers from across the curriculum--the course included reading, math, social studies, ESL and a number of other teachers, as well as administrators from the school and the district--learned a great deal about how they might be more effective in helping these students, as these words from one teacher reflect:

> The students who spoke to the class regarding their educational experiences were the highlight of the class. There was humor, charm, joy, and insight. Often their interpretations of the educational systems were at odds with the adults from the countries who presented their views. That was not exactly unexpected, but it was an eye opener...Actively involving the students in our classes was a stroke of genius. The learning was immediate, human, and useful.

The students also benefited from the extra attention and the opportunity to talk about themselves and their countries in a teacher education course as was evidenced by new-found self-confidence in some of them and better academic performance in others. While learning from students is one hallmark of an effective teacher, it is also assists students.

The inclusion of graduate students in the class was an experiment that we plan to repeat: they benefited immeasurably from being in the schools, working intensively with one of the students, and discussing the student's progress (among other things) with more experienced teachers. They were also able to contribute to the teacher and the school by tutoring students in need of extra attention and helping the classroom teachers with a variety of tasks.

There are a number of other ways in which teachers can and do engage students in collaborative learning. Dialogue journals encourage students to become more reflective about their own learning and more assertive in letting teachers know when classes are less or more effective for them. When students engage in project work or help decide the thematic focus of upcoming units, they contribute to teachers' professional growth, for it is unlikely

that any teacher would have the diverse knowledge required for all these projects or units. Students become teachers in these cases. Teachers can also create assignments which help bring the community into the school and engage community members in the teaching and learning process. Students can be asked to interview family members and record folk tales, proverbs, and other family wisdom, and then bring these to school to share both orally and in writing, helping teachers and other students to better understand the students' families and communities and also making parents and family members more connected with school.

Collaboration across Schools and Universities

Sometimes collaboration can extend across school boundaries. Let me describe two such collaborations with which my colleague Ron Schwartz and I have been involved. The first involves a partnership between the ESOL/Bilingual Program at our university and the English Language Teaching Faculty at the *Instituto Tecnólogico y de Estudios Superiores*, a 26-campus technological university in Mexico, commonly referred to as the TEC. This university was engaged in a substantial program review which involved finding ways to help students meet a higher English language proficiency requirement, both at entry and graduation. At the same time, several members of the English teaching faculty at various campuses of the university were enrolled in a Master's level program through distance learning. Seeing an opportunity to combine the two initiatives, but needing additional faculty and resources to undertake the project, the University contacted us to engage in a collaborative project by which the questions needing answers for the restructuring of the English program became the foci of thesis research for the Master's candidates. Thus, the teacher-researchers were engaged in the most profound form of teacher research: research on their own program, their students, and their university as part of the research needed to make informed decisions about redesigning their English programs.

The teachers studied a diverse set of topics: they investigated the teaching of writing on campus and compared the course content with the current and expected future writing demands on students; they analyzed the need for English for Specific Purposes on campus and identified ways in which that could be provided; they analyzed and evaluated the relative focus on social and academic language in the various curricula and texts used in the program and compared that with results from teacher and student surveys; and they wrestled with ways of meeting the administration's expecta-

tions of a high TOEFL score (focused on reading and listening comprehension) with the other practical English needs of students. Faculty from both institutions served as mentors and members of thesis committees, and graduate students on our campus assisted in locating materials, sometimes engaging in long-distance conversations about similar teaching and research interests. The collaboration benefited both institutions.

The other collaboration is between the ESOL Bilingual Program at UMBC and the English teaching program at the *Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*. Part of a redevelopment project, the focus of this effort is on helping to redesign the undergraduate applied linguistics, or EFL teacher training program. Included in that effort is the design and installation of a new language lab/media center. In addition to dialogue between faculties of both institutions, the project has provided an excellent source of development for our graduate students and recent graduates, who serve as interns in the program.

Increasing Collaboration between Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education and Theory and Practice in Language Teaching

Historically, teacher education and teaching have been separated by a chasm that is only partially filled with field observation/practicum and student teaching experiences which bring aspiring and experienced teachers together. The practice of language teaching and research on language learning face a similar gap. Until recently, research on language learning rarely involved the knowledge or experiences of the language teacher, and language teachers often viewed research as remote from their concerns. It is possible for teachers, researchers, and teacher educators to collaborate, however, and to integrate teaching with teacher education and research. One means for doing so is the Professional Development School or Center.

Creating Professional Development Centers/Schools

A Professional Development School or Center (PDS/PDC) is a partnership between a teacher education program and a school focused on the improvement of teaching and learning. Modeled after the clinical experiences of other professions such as medicine and law, in a PDS, experienced and aspiring teachers, researchers, graduate students, teacher educators, and others involved in education work together (President's Commission on Teacher Education 1992). The exact form of the PDS varies substantially; in a PDC,

especially, the scope of the collaboration may be limited to issues of technology in education, or assessment, or working with special populations. The PDC which I have been developing with a secondary school partner is focused on the needs of ESL students in achieving English language proficiency and academic success.

In a PDS/PDC aspiring teachers have opportunities to test theories in classes at the school and to work collaboratively with experienced teachers on an ongoing basis. Experienced teachers have opportunities to work collaboratively with teacher education faculty, graduate students, or the teacher candidates in research, curriculum development, and teacher education. And, teacher educators, who have too long been removed from the day-to-day realities of schools, now have an opportunity to test their theories in a real "laboratory." Our collaborative experiences with this model have included a number of graduate student-teacher research collaborations, regular placement of field observation and student teachers in the school, the collaborative development of thematic units and new curriculum by teachers across the curriculum, collaborative involvement in various school activities by graduate students engaged in thesis research or final projects (for example, cross-age tutoring projects, leadership institutes, and programs to encourage students to consider postsecondary education), and most important, the enrichment of both institutions and their programs through the broad base of collaboration.

Collaborative efforts like these offer the possibility of making research more responsive to practice and practice more responsive to research. They also benefit everyone involved: the students, the teachers, the schools, the communities, and the teacher education programs. They promote a way to enrich ESL/EFL pre-service teacher education and a means of enabling ESL/EFL teachers to continue their needed life-long learning.

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