Could encouraging self-mentoring as Teacher Development and Teacher Education courses based on realities rectify TESOL's professionally detrimental image problem?

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Introduction

Detrimental accusations towards young unqualified teachers working as L1 speaker teachers in contexts where English is not the native language and the overall 'major image problem' (Pennington, 1992) TESOL suffers from those looking on, is seemingly unescapable. The lack of status given to teachers in these contexts and the challenging physical and psychological conditions (Johnston, 1997) novice teachers can find themselves in, has a direct impact on the level of participation in professional developmental practices. Amongst other issues, temporary contracts and a reluctance from institutions to invest in transient staff (Farrell, 2016), is leading to a reinforcing of these detrimental critiques. In order to impact upon the teacher quality challenge TESOL faces (Darling-Hammond, 2003), many aspects of teacher education (TE) (the procedures built to equip teachers with the behaviours and knowledge needed to work effectively in the classroom) and teacher development (TD) (the enhancement of an individuals' professionality through continuous conscious reflection and further work-related studies) along with motivational factors candidates themselves deem important, require improvement. Of course, there are numerous *unchangeable* external factors at play which both TE and TD cannot control and as such shall not be investigated in detail in this paper. Factors such as social hierarchies and lack of authority (McKnight, 1992; Neilsen, 2011; Mann & Walsh 2019), political issues in global employment (Crookes, 1997), employment advancement (Pennington & Riley, 1991), and deeply embedded characteristics which some individual teachers hold (Roger, 2010; Bowen, 2016). The *changeable* aspects of TESOL TE and TD though, can be and need to be tackled.

What is sought, is an attempt to disrupt the prolonged cycle of disillusioned teachers leaving the field (Stainton, 2018) by increasing developmental desire through TD in TESOL driven by individual teachers (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017), engraining reflective attitudes towards relationships and jobs which new TESOL teachers are regularly unprepared to do (Motha & Lin, 2014), and introduce pre-service TE systems discussing harsh realities teachers might face should they opt to take an L1 instructor position overseas (Copland, Garton & Burns, 2014). An argument will be put forward that it is only with these conditions met new teachers can construct their self-as-teacher (Farrell, 2016), gain inner empowerment (Murray, 2010) and apply appropriate accountability to their actions (Lauermann &

Karabenick, 2011). Current TE courses are not covering in enough detail realistic knowledge that will facilitate continuous TD in novice teachers once they enter various institutional workplaces. TE needs to break this cycle if its image of professionalism is to be significantly changed. This paper will attempt to highlight the main issues contributing to this problem and seek solutions to *changeable* aspects of TE and TD which may be compounding the 'major image problem' in TESOL.

Rationale

The author approaches this topic as a relatively fresh TEFL teacher who moved to South Korea in 2016 with nothing but a 120-hour TEFL certificate, a BSc in Product Design and an intrinsic passion for information transfer as their tools. Having navigated a first-year probation, (Farrell, 2016) leading TE workshops of their own, and having a successfully recognised (by Daejeon Metropolitan Office of Education) 4-year stint in the East Asian country. They claim to have identified ways to professionally develop through self-efficacy, alongside realisations of limitation, and the necessity for TE programs to accurately reflect these realities. Having learnt by doing, they argue for a belief-based, holistic approach, focusing on issues regularly left untouched by many TE programs. Any arguments made take into account *unchangeable* fossilised factors aforementioned, which may not be altered by an experimental TE syllabus or self-driven TD.

TESOL's image problem

The 'major image problem' in TESOL which (Pennington, 1992) outlined continues to this current day. After all, a job that any native speaker can claim to be able to do is hardly one which can command too much respect professionally. TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and encompassing TEFL, EFL, ESL and other subsets from hereafter) in contexts where English is not the native language continues to attract teachers with little formation of their life vocation (Roger, 2010), pushed into the field by negative factors in their home countries. Encouraged by expedited recruitment tactics (Collins & Shubin, 2015),

extrinsic motivational lures (Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt, 2001), and flashy advertisements including images and rhetoric of parties, exotic beaches and cultural tourism (Stainton, 2018), rather than a pre-planned decision to commit to a profession and vocation (Johnston, 1997). The opportunity lands on many graduate plates seemingly from nowhere as an accident or second thought (Mullock, 2009). Here the first issue is encountered; building professional practice into people who do not, or did not desire to become professional teachers. The bombardment holiday marketing of TESOL confuses not only the partly-qualified teachers entering, but also the sense of belonging (Bowen, 2016) TESOL has in a professional conversation.

Leung (2009:49) defines a professional generally as a "trained and qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct in their practice." In a TESOL context, professionalism is seen more as a *continuous* engagement with developmental procedures, openness to reflexivity, "the willingness and capacity to turn our thinking on itself" (2009:53) and the handling of challenging issues teaching positions introduce, these could be institutional policies, sociocultural factors, learner behaviours and available resources among other things. TE courses are designed to provide sometimes completely new candidates with the knowledge required to navigate these difficulties, and a 'trained and qualified specialist' as Leung defines it, does a 120-hour online TEFL certificate not make. As this is the rather low barrier of entry to many overseas positions, logically one would argue many TE courses are not covering the ground required of them. TE should be getting teachers to a stage of readiness and preparing them as much as possible for their ongoing learning and TD expected from a professional (Kiely & Askham, 2012). This TE is failing. New teachers are "shocked" by the space between their expectations and realities (Kanno & Stuart, 2011:237), and are unable to practice their development in a way they were taught (Borg, 2009). Teachers become disheartened by the lack of standards falling into the trap of perpetuating the negative image cycle themselves (Roger, 2010), and even when employed for an extended period of time, still do not *feel* like professionals (Pennington, 1992). Kiely & Askham (2012:497) claim that TE programmes cannot fully prepare teachers. This is arguable. They are not currently grounded in the correct areas that promote realistic and reflective TD in the early stages of a TESOL career.

Becoming a professional through practice takes years of consistent commitment and reflection on a teacher's own performance and context (Farrell, 2017). For a new teacher who is transient (Farrell, 2016) this isn't instantly attainable as the time limitation is simply too harsh. Reframing the focus of professionalism from *being one* to *participating*, through TE handling of *primitive* emotional factors, (primitive describing often uncontrollable emotional characteristics often considered inappropriate in the workplace such as rage, anger, sadness and the act of crying) (Nussbaum, 2001; Golombek & Doran, 2014) and *unsettling* stresses (Sellen, 2007; Bowen, 2016; Collins & Shubin, 2015), such as nervousness, instability, disillusion and demotivation. We cannot expect confused novice teachers with no agency or desire for the career established, to assist in painting a professional image without appropriate TE programmes and TD participation. Over time, professional identities may develop in novice teachers increasing the likelihood for retention and spread further within the TESOL community, forcing those just looking to "teach by the beach" (Roger, 2010:143) into the minority.

New TESOL teacher identities

Identity-in-practice, the association between who teachers are and their work completed in particular groups (Barkhuizen, 2019; Mann & Walsh, 2019), contributes to the problematic image teachers in overseas English teaching L2 contexts portray. A TESOL teacher's inability to identify as 'real' impacts heavily on the amount of professional TD they undertake. Identities are formed within communities one interacts with (Mann & Walsh, 2019), inside working hours - fellow teachers, students, administrators and managers. Outside - sports clubs, friendship circles, relationships and families. Our identities alternate greatly depending on power dynamics and discourses available to us in these communities. There is little wonder then that novice teachers suffer challenges, anxieties, frustrations, stress and even extreme isolation (Bowen, 2016; Farrell, 2016; Murray, 2010) when starting a new career, especially in positions lacking TD outlets to deal with these new confusing dynamics. Entering a new country, with new rules (Gitlin, 1987, cited in: Crookes, 1997:69), surrounded by new faces, fending for themselves with little regulation (Stainton, 2018). Identities change, masks are worn (Collins & Shubin, 2015), shielding themselves from the inner

reflexivity which is required at the core of TD. These issues are not facilitating the continuous development needed to form committed professionals.

Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt (2001) outlined some major areas of interest concerning teacher job satisfaction with their study of 107 experienced TESOL teachers. Along with 5 distinct needs *(Relationships, extrinsic motivation, autonomy, self-realisation and institutional support)* there appeared to be a clear outcome that the longer a teacher stays in the profession the less extrinsic rewards were of importance, indicating that these enticements are indeed pulling novice teachers in. Bowen (2016) discusses novice teacher emotions and stresses, with the recurrent theme being that the 5 key intrinsic needs are missing from many entry positions. It is essential for these needs be present in order to enable adequate space for TD to flourish. 'Real' teachers regularly have these things in place as a community, such as relationships and institutional support, whereas novice TESOL teachers are often left to figure it out for themselves (Bowen, 2016; Farrell, 2016) with long-lasting damaging consequences. These 5 key needs will be looked at in further detail, asking how TE and TD can be used to help novice teachers when the *changeable* aspects are not present in a position.

Relationships

Our identities as teachers are established when surrounding ourselves with fellow practitioners (Barkhuizen, 2019; Mann & Walsh, 2019), and teacher job satisfaction can be tied to these relationships with members of an educational environment, including both colleagues and learners. Farrell (2017), mentions how teachers should regularly gauge the reaction of students to our work (Reflection-in-action) adjusting our approaches as we go, if deemed undesirable. This intrinsic desire to do a 'good job' often based on personal reactions after class (Reflection-on-action) or during after-hours dialogue with fellow TESOL teachers (Community). Positive feedback dramatically increasing the feeling of belonging in those who accept it (Farrell & Baecher, 2017). It is important to note how being aware of "whom the results are good for, and in what way" (Liu, 2015:139) is vital, as an overfocus of reflection can lead to a significant drop of pedagogical value in teaching materials (Kanno &

Stuart, 2011). Liu (2015) repeats the primary goal of these relationships is reflection to produce enhanced possibilities for student learning, not the TD itself, something easily lost in the whirlwind of new TESOL positions and overfocus. Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt (2001) highlighted that the top 2 aspects of job satisfaction were interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students, showing just how essential they are to a committed teacher and their developmental mindsets. Without these relationships in place, TD via blogging or online spaces to vent the reflections one makes, should be encouraged and manipulated.

More focus must be given on TE courses to interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships (e.g., Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2014, Mercado & Mann, 2015) considering many new teachers may not have even had any form of employment before, let alone one rife with the complexities a foreign culture brings. Our relationships with co-workers are often steeped with difficulties, sharing facilities, supplies and clashing teaching styles all contribute to problematic situations (Bowen, 2016). Some qualified local teachers may not appreciate extra work with an inexperienced teacher adding to their own stress levels (Schaap, Et Al, 2019). It seems that increases to realistic, diverse, cultural examples during pre-service TE could improve in-service TD attitudes (Gitlin, 1987; Crookes, 1997). Leaving that knowledge for a new teacher to discover alone, plus hectic large class sizes and scheduling limitations, all add to the pressure cooker with teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student relationships suffering, leading to breakdowns and abandonments (Stainton, 2018). Without community support networks and realistic knowledge established during TE, TD is facing an uphill battle.

Autonomy

Restrictive socio-political contexts and strict contractual agreements both contribute to a detrimental effect on teacher professionalism and development. Teachers are regularly briefed during TE on curriculum design but once employed, this exciting part of the role is regularly controlled by higher authorities, ''one of the most fundamental tools by which teachers can discharge their responsibilities is thus beyond their control'' (Crookes, 1997:68). Autonomy is critical to one identifying and developing into a 'real teacher' (Collins & Shubin, 2015). When surrounded by professionals, responsibilities need to be shared

otherwise this identification of status may remain blurry (Barkhuizen, 2019). This is often challenging to achieve in hierarchical contexts filled with office politics and workplace feeding frenzies (Gitlin, 1987), even in government supported roles, administrators are cut off from a teacher's desire for continuous TD perhaps unaware of the importance. Instead, concerning themselves with penny pinching over strict contracts and keeping a 'guest' teacher firmly in their place. In the private sector even more so with lesson planning and design sometimes even exempt from paid professional responsibilities (Crookes, 1997).

This does beg the question a novice with limited real-world experience and TE history might ask: 'If I am not getting paid, why would I do it?' An autonomous, intrinsically driven teacher may commit to extra work as they can envision the work as beneficial to their own TD. They are motivated by the independence and freedom to create (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2011). Whereas a novice extrinsically driven teacher will not, being mainly motivated by money and benefits (Collins & Shubin, 2015) with no TD concerns of their own. Crookes (1997) goes further on the unpaid extra work claim, discussing that in part-time work this is most certainly the case with regrettably predictable effects on the quality of work (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Liu, 2015). If contracts are to remain volatile in length with rigid rules and highly profit orientated with little scope for TD in-house, the negative spiral will continue. TE then, must focus on the importance of self-realised TD, at least informing teachers of these contractual realities, perhaps shining a light on where the space is for teachers to continue their growth even in the dark confines of these contracts.

Self-Realisation

It is possible to dive deeper into intrinsically driven teachers and their emotional foundations in search of this self-realised TD. Farrell (2017) claims our professional practice is driven by the philosophies we have carried since birth. What we have experienced growing up can form opinions, teaching styles and beliefs today. To reflect accurately on these philosophies requires knowledge of teacher's backgrounds, including heritage, ethnicity, religious affiliation, socioeconomic background, family and personal values and so forth. Lortie (1975:79) coined the term "apprenticeship of observation" to describe similar

reflection on teacher philosophies. As novices have experienced vastly differing schooling, experiencing a chocolate box assortment of teachers, is it possible to define how one novice should act. If 'apprenticeships' have differed so wildly, an attempt at grouping incredibly varied teachers seems challenging from the outset and novice L1 speaker teachers may never be seen as a 'real' by local teachers in a foreign context anyway. The aim might be to include the word 'professional' in job titles as a nudge forward, attempting to drive TD behaviours.

Kanno & Stuart (2011:239) outline that becoming a second language teacher requires the "true commitment of the self" and not stagnating as an assigned piece of the classroom. It is this decision to commit to long-term self-development, opening up to alternative teacher beliefs and philosophies, which is a fundamental part of professionalism. Commitment is a powerful factor in overcoming the challenges of inexperience and discovering identity development awareness (Day & Gu, 2007). This awareness must be included in some way in TE, *before* a novice teacher leaves for employment, to enable noticing to happen in real time or the noticing may not have time to take effect. Kiely & Askham (2012:497) argued education cannot prepare for all eventualities and contexts, but they can achieve "readiness".

The real-life working environments we find ourselves in, combined with the lack of realistic TE on the importance of self-development (Gitlin, 1987; Crookes, 1997), can force semi-committed teachers onto unprofessional pathways. They are unable to practice the professional growth that TE programmes are claiming to expect, as there is no institutional support and no self-desire. Educated teachers are being blocked by some *unchangeable* external forces in workplaces and these external forces must take on some of the image problem blame (Pennington, 1992) and change. Stresses and traumas can surface from these forces as teachers feel trapped, suffer identity crises and shame (Bowen, 2016). A toxic, unrelenting, unprofessional environment, lacking in institutional support is bad enough for a novice teacher to *survive*, and even worse in facilitating their psychological and philosophical journey through TD and intrinsically driven professional status.

Institutional Support

Personal accountability (Farrell, 2017) of professionalism is a fundamental aspect of the image problem Pennington (1992) mentions. It must be noted that a teacher's motivation to practice TD can be increased and decreased by the measurement of institutional support they receive, and varies wildly depending on contexts, with survival more often a primary concern than the longevity of a teaching career. Crookes (1997) and Warford & Reeves (2003) paint a grim picture of the realities in many contexts, isolation, lack of opportunity, competition, poor materials and fiscal constraints all dragging down teacher motivation. Bowen (2016:1207) echoes those sentiments, mentioning "deep-seated anger" and "resentment" towards institutions who have abandoned their teachers through a lack of support and one could argue a fresh TESOL teacher has no power in this area, with their 'guest', transient, 'not real' status, tying their hands to an extent. Mouffe (2013, cited in: Morgan 2016:709) highlights these "irreconcilable social struggles" and describes the political environment as "fundamentally hegemonic and antagonistic". There is no wonder that many new teachers are just looking for fun in the Sun (Roger, 2010), and call it a day after a year avoiding the taxing baggage that comes with a long-term career in TESOL. Many do not wish to be scapegoated for complex societal issues a 'real teacher' will encounter.

It is possible to view things from a positive perspective. Hatton & Smith (1995) explain that when a teacher takes social, political and cultural influence into account and adequately reflects, they are actively engaging in the TD professional practice of *critical reflection*, a desire to understand on a deeper level and alter their world view accordingly. Increased regulation for TD to be included in employment positions may be difficult to implement with thousands of private institutions solely focused on profits. Those lucky enough to be supported by their particular institution undoubtably having a higher chance of developing and remaining in the field.

Unchangeable Extrinsic Motivation and Available Progression

Among the 5 key needs both extrinsic motivation and progression although important to recognise, are unlikely to be impacted by TE or TD. As Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt (2001) revealed, extrinsic rewards tend to be of minimal motivation to those with many hours behind them. These rewards are more seductive to new TESOL teachers with a clouded view of their futures who have fallen into the job by accident (Mullock, 2009). A recipe for disaster for those concerned with TD and TESOL's image problem. Money, security, life's meaning, family balance and other concerns all come into play, but at a later stage for committed teachers. The challenge here exists to shift the focus from extrinsic rewards to TD itself being the reward. As the lust for short-term transient staff exists, the lure for new teachers may be simply too hard to resist. *Unchangeable*, and something TE programs cannot assist with. Extrinsic benefits should be positioned for attainment once expertise has been proved (Kotzee, 2014), not used as a replacement for a lack of TD opportunities.

TD needs to be engrained in the role of a TESOL professional through TE. TESOL teachers, educators and businesses as a community are responsible for A) Professional, realistic knowledge bases through education courses. B) Professional codes of ethics, through self-motivation and self-mentoring. C) Professional integrity, judgement and loyalty, through candidate hiring and workplace environments (Liyanage, Walker & Singh, 2015:487). C) is *unchangeable* and not something TE or TD can impact. Hiring practices suffer governmental restrictions and individual employer bias. Little can be done through TE to combat this. Both A) and B) are c*hangeable* and can and should be looked at.

At a certain point in their education, a student teacher must become a professional teacher, at least in their mind (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). In preparation for employment students need to shed the identity of a novice and identify as 'real' as much as possible to avoid the crippling and career threatening imposter syndrome many encounter (Bowen, 2016). More time must be spent on realistic experiences and concerns during TE than unrelatable topics. Condensed TESOL education courses do not commit enough time to knowledge based on reality, as mentioned earlier beginning language teachers are "shocked" by the gap between their idealized visions of teaching and the realities of the classroom (Kanno & Stuart, 2011:237). This gap requires closing. The construction of identity should also be a core focus of TE or it may never become complete. Teachers without the power to realise their

potential and notice the assistance professional practice (be that, self-reflective, with peers or online communities) offers, may be destined to be viewed as an amateur. For a refreshed TESOL identity to become the norm the imagination requires furnishing (Kiely & Askham, 2012) and intrinsic self-developmental desires grounded in realistic expectations need planting. TE lacking in self-developmental importance gives the illusion of readiness, a mirage that disappears within the first week of work along with a teacher's ability to view themselves as real. This adequate starting point (Kanno & Stuart, 2011) is relying solely on teacher determination to develop from that point onwards, which unfortunately rarely takes place (Brandt, 2006). TD toolkits are idealized in condensed TE, not based on realities.

If teacher expertise is formed through individual experiences and not through instruction (Kotzee, 2014), the focus should be on readying students based on realism due to their lack of real-world experience in an attempt to speed up the process. Practicing professionalism from the first day, not after they have decided to commit having already contributed to the image problem cycle. Introducing cross-cultural classes to an educational program is one way of tackling the reality check many TESOL teachers encounter. Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2014:332) aims to better prepare for the "intercultural tasks" that lay ahead. Here, students are asked to explore their selves, extracting intrinsic desires and enabling awareness to develop once immersed overseas. The role for teacher educators is to enable students to *become* experts though professionalism that they wouldn't have taken part in otherwise (Kotzee, 2014). Mercado & Mann (2015:49) discuss the IMMERSE TD programme, designed for teachers in Peru with little to no "education, knowledge or credentials." This mentoring approach internalizes successes, increasing confidence and motivation, but most importantly their "sense of professionalism" (2015:53). In many contexts TESOL teachers find themselves alone. Installing a self-mentoring form of TD would be ideal.

Self-mentoring as a TD tool

The delicate balance between mentors giving advice and respecting autonomy (Furness 2008), and the sometimes, toxic nature of collegial relationships (Bowen, 2016) leads to a suggestion for self-mentoring as a development tool. The self is the one who understands

intrinsic desires and ultimately who deems themselves as worthy. Crookes (1997) and Mercado & Mann (2015) suggest ongoing evaluation from the self, not from those hanging the sword above. Identity is not easily formed, even for those who have made a clear commitment to the profession (Kanno & Stuart, 2011) and prolonged in-practice learning may not guarantee expertise. A conscious realisation of achieving 'real teacher' status may never actually appear. However, the conscious practice of professionalism and TD new teachers commit to, deems them one from an observer. Conscious reflective practice (Farrell, 2001) assists the most self-defeating teacher and journaling of achievements can provide the undeniable evidence which verbal dialogue is sometimes unable to. A "reference to what an expert can do and another cannot." (Kotzee, 2014:176). These may take time to build up, but are highly beneficial to any TESOL teacher struggling for validity and should be encouraged at every stage of realistic TE programmes.

Conclusion

TESOL does have an identity problem like (Pennington, 1992) suggests, some of which is *unchangeable* and can be frustrating. However, most of the problem comes from the self and a teachers own vision. With any native speaker able to claim they can do the job TESOL teachers will always face an uphill battle for identity and acceptance from others from esteemed professional fields. Educators and TE courses are responsible for student teacher readiness and realistic preparation (Kiely & Askham, 2012; Kotzee, 2014). Teachers themselves are responsible for carrying out continuous TD and professional practice, acting in a manner befitting the title (Leung, 2009). The entry point to many a teacher's career in TESOL is not through education, it can happen by accident or chance and if a school is willing to hire such a teacher, the onus should ideally be on them to foster TD and create the environment required for a new teacher to notice a deficiency. Recruiters and companies unfortunately pay little attention to this area, as the insatiable demand for transient staff (Farrell, 2016) and profit is too much to turn down, leaving TD in the dust.

It is a teachers' desire and acceptance to face complex societal issues, commitment to self-develop (Johnston, 1997; Kanno & Stuart, 2011), and personal accountability (Farrell, 2017)

of what follows, which will ultimately drive TESOL's reputation further in the direction of a professional career. The intrinsic light within some graduates to be great teachers and professionals, is sometimes cast in shade by external factors. With a community of professionalism embedded through realistic TE courses, and self-developmental mentoring through TD in place, the professional TESOL silhouette left behind will be clear for all to gaze upon long into the future.

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