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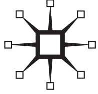

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1
Second Language Teacher Education: A Reality Check

Thomas S.C. Farrell

Introduction

This introductory chapter is a state-of-the-art (SOA – of sorts) on second language teacher education (SLTE). However, it is not the usual type of SOA review (for a recent excellent review see Wright, 2010) one would normally read because I maintain that second language teacher education is in a *state* (i.e., a negative state) and so this chapter is more of a reality check for second language educators that we need to be doing something different. Part of the reason for the state we may be in is that we may have lost sight of whose needs teacher educators are addressing when preparing second language teachers: their own or their teacher learners' needs? This is not an easy question to answer because there are many stakeholders involved within second language teacher education and each can have a different agenda than the other, but as you will see in this chapter I agree with Faez and Vaelo (2012) when they suggest that teacher preparation programmes should reconsider how programme content needs could be aligned more closely with the needs of novice teachers. As such, I also talk about what some teacher educators are attempting in order to prepare their teacher learners for the reality of what they will face in the classroom in their first year(s). Thus I also discuss the *art* in terms of self-initiated innovations that various teacher educators in different contexts have attempted to implement in order to compensate for the *state* we seem to be in. In addition, when I talk about "innovation" here and throughout the book I mean the process that has taken place in terms of the actions and steps various educators have taken to implement a particular innovation (Mann & Edge, 2013). As Mann and Edge (2013: 2) point out: "it is the realisation of an idea in action that constitutes genuine innovation." I shall return to the idea of innovations and teacher learning in the final chapter.

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The reality

First my reality: I was not adequately prepared to deal with the realities of teaching in a real context (Farrell, 2012). I clearly remember my first month as a newly qualified English language teacher in a university-affiliated language institute. In the third week of the semester the Director of Studies told me that she would be coming to observe my class. I prepared as usual and commenced my lesson following my plan. The lesson seemed to be going well but after about twenty minutes the Director suddenly stood up and, in a "You call yourself a teacher?" moment (Fanselow, 1987: 1), suggested that I was not doing the lesson correctly (I was doing a communicative activity in groups). She proceeded to take over the class for the remaining 25 minutes, drilling the students via teacher-led grammar activities. After class, she said to me, "That is how to do it!" and then she said not to worry as I would learn in time, and that "those new group techniques you were using will not work in this institute." I remember how low I felt emotionally and professionally as I had been denigrated in front of my own students and how I felt like leaving the profession, thinking that maybe I was not suited to be a language teacher. Thank goodness that, at the very beginning of my career, a few colleagues had decided to act as my "guides and guardians" (Zeichner, 1983: 9). These colleagues boosted my morale and provided wise counsel.

That was 35 years ago and over the years I have often wondered how many other novice teachers have had negative experiences but without the guides and guardians who came to my rescue. How many of these novices travelling alone decided to abandon the teaching path before ever discovering the joys of teaching? As a result, I have always taken special interest in the development of novice teaching professionals in TESOL, their experiences and especially their well-being (the issues and challenges they face), as well as in how they are prepared (or not prepared) for their first years of teaching (e.g., Farrell, 2003, 2006a,b, 2007a,b, 2008a,b,c, 2009, 2012). Yes, there are many novice language teachers who seem to be able to navigate their first years successfully either largely on their own or thanks to supportive administrators, staff and fellow teachers. Unfortunately, it seems that supportive environments are the exception rather than the rule. Too often novice teachers are left to survive on their own in less than ideal conditions and, as a result, some drop out (as in teacher attrition) of the profession early in their careers (Crookes, 1997; Peacock, 2009).

So I would say *the reality* is that we are still not preparing our teacher learners adequately about how to deal with the realities of teaching in a real classroom (Faez & Vaelo, 2012; Wright, 2010). Unfortunately, some teacher educators, teachers, students and administrators still assume that once novice teachers have graduated from a teacher preparation programme they will be able to

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apply what they have learned during their first year of teaching. However, research in general education has indicated that the transition from the teacher education programme to the first year of teaching has been characterized as a type of "reality shock" because of "the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life" and by the realities of the social and political contexts of the school (Veenman, 1984: 143). This reality shock is often aggravated because novice teachers have not one, but two complex jobs during these years: "teaching effectively and learning to teach" (Wildman, Niles, Milagro, & McLaughlin, 1989: 471). Thus, during the transition from training to teaching novice teachers, as Richards (1998: 164) points out, must be able to construct and reconstruct "new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes."

During this transition period, some novice language teachers may realize that they have not been adequately prepared for how to deal with these two different roles (Peacock, 2009), and may also have discovered that they have been set up in their pre-service courses (and teaching practice) for a teaching approach that does not work in real classrooms, or the school culture may prohibit implementation of these "new" approaches (Shin, 2012). Consequently, many novice teachers are left to cope on their own in a sink-or-swim type situation (Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986). Continuing the theme of the relative weak impact of language teacher education programmes on the actions of novice teachers, Freeman (1994) cautioned language educators and novice teachers alike that most of what is presented in language teacher education programmes may be washed away by the first year experiences of becoming a novice teacher, a point also confirmed later in research studies by Richards and Pennington (1998) and by Farrell (2003).

In addition, language teacher education programmes may be at fault because they are not delivering relevant content that novice language teachers can implement in real classroom settings (Johnson, 2013). As Tarone and Allwright (2005: 12) argue, "differences between the academic course content in language teacher preparation programs and the real conditions that novice language teachers are faced with in the language classroom appear to set up a gap that cannot be bridged by beginning teacher learners." Indeed, Johnson (2013: 75) has recently noted the "disjuncture between teachers' own instructional histories as learners and the concepts they are exposed to in SLTE programs epitomizes the persistent theory/practice divide that remains a major challenge for SLTE programs today." She goes on to say that it is the responsibility of SLTE programmes to present concepts they think are important to teachers, "but to do so in ways that bring these concepts to bear on concrete practical activity, connecting them to everyday concepts and the goal-directed activities of everyday teaching" (2013: 76).

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Learning to teach in the first year is thus a complex process for novice teachers to go through (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Featherstone, 1993; Solomon, Worthy & Carter, 1993) because they are faced with specific challenges that must be addressed if they are not to abandon the profession after only a short period of time (Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986). It is important to ask how second language teacher education programs could bridge this gap more effectively and thus better prepare novice teachers for the challenges they may face in the first years teaching.

Laying the foundation(s)

How should be try to address the issues outlined above or in other words, how should we check this reality? First I would suggest that SLTE and second language teacher educators should not only focus on the formal period of the teacher education program but also include the novice years of teaching. I define novice teachers as those who are sometimes called newly qualified teachers (NQTs), and who have completed their language teacher education programme (including teaching practice) and commenced teaching TESOL in an educational institution (usually within three years of completing their teacher education program). I see three years as realistic (Huberman, 1989: 199, calls this the novice period: "career entry years"). As can be observed with this definition, age is not relevant. It is general enough to include teachers in any context who have acquired a second license (endorsement) in teaching English to speakers of other languages as long as they have taken a particular course that qualifies them to become a TESOL teacher. I also can see where one can be a "novice" at instructing a new technology.

Unfortunately, what usually occurs is that on graduation from an SLTE programme most novice teachers suddenly have no further contact with their teacher educators, and from the very first day on the job must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues, often without much guidance from the new school/institution. These challenges include lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management and identity development. So in this chapter I also outline practical suggestions that can help bridge this gap, with the idea that novice teachers can experience the transition from teacher preparation to the first years of teaching as "less like 'hazing' and more like professional development" (Johnson, 1996: 48). I have called this bridging period, novice-service teacher education (Farrell, 2012). However, I now want to expand on the concept and suggest we eliminate the term pre-service and just have terms/concepts that address the issues of teacher education and development: novice-service to include second language teacher preparation (or the "old" pre-service term), and the first novice year(s) of teaching and then *in-service* to include any aspects of teacher education and development after the

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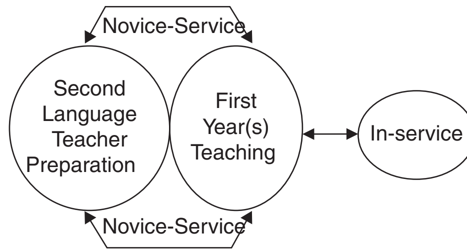

Figure 1.1 Novice-service teacher education

novice-service years. Figure 1.1 outlines a basic model of novice-service teacher education.

Novice-service teacher education

Novice-service teacher education begins in second language teacher preparation programmes and continues into the first years of teaching in real classrooms. It includes three main stakeholders – novice teachers, second language educators and school administrators – all working in collaboration to make for a smooth transition from the SLT preparation program to the first years of teaching. The idea is that the knowledge garnered from this tripartite collaboration can be used to better inform SLT preparation educators/programmes so that novice teachers can be better prepared for the complexity of real classrooms. For example, working in the US context Margo DelliCarpini and Oslando noted that ESL teachers were struggling with the demands of content where the content was that of the academic program in which their English language learner (ELLs) students were enrolled and where content teachers had a lack of awareness and understanding of the needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. They realized that this was an issue related directly to ESL teacher preparation so they devised what they call a two-way content based instruction (CBI) that builds on and extends teacher collaboration and traditional CBI. This innovation, they note, means that language-driven content objectives (which are enacted in the mainstream classroom) and content-driven language objectives (which are enacted in the ESL classroom) are collaboratively developed therefore eliminating the disconnect that is often present between language and content in the classroom.

SLT preparation

Johnson (2009: 11) proposed that the knowledge-base of second language teacher education programmes inform three broad areas: "(1) the content of L2 teacher education programs: *What L2 teachers need to know*; (2) the pedagogies

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that are taught in L2 teacher education programs: *How L2 teachers should teach*; and (3) the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned: *How L2 teachers learn to teach*." However, there is still no consensus in TESOL about what specific courses, and if they are connected to teaching practice (TP), should be included in SLT preparation programmes, and as Mattheoudakis (2007: 1273) has observed, "The truth is that we know very little about what actually happens" in many of these courses. Part of the reason for this is that most SLT preparation programmes vary so much in their nature, content, length and even in their philosophical and theoretical underpinnings, and so it is no wonder, as Faez (2011: 31) has recently indicated, that there is still "no agreement in the field as to exactly what effective language teachers need to know."

However, we can still point out several dimensions of knowledge, skills and awareness that educators agree are important for teacher learners to acquire in second language teacher education programmes in order to become effective teachers (Richards & Farrell, 2011). Among these dimensions Richards and Farrell (2011) suggest that a teacher's ability to acquire both the discourse of TESOL as well as the ability to use effective classroom language is a key dimension. They also note that teacher-learning thus involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge (academic and pedagogical) of language teaching, and how to apply these in teaching, but also what it means to be a language teacher in terms of developing the identity of a language teacher in a particular context. In addition, Richards and Farrell (2013) have noted that teacher learners need to be sensitive to the norms that operate in the contexts in which they work as well as reflect on their practice in order to further develop their theories and concepts throughout their first years. I will not however enter into the debate of what should (or should not) be included in SLT preparation. Instead, I outline and discuss what should be added to existing courses within the programme (regardless of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of that programme), and the addition of one supplementary course that is focused exclusively on exploring the first years of teaching through reflective practice.

During SLT preparation programmes pre-service teachers can be better prepared for what they will face in their first years in two ways: the first way is by making clear connections, in all the preparation courses, to teaching in the first year by including reflective activities and assignments that are related to the subject matter of those courses (Farrell, 1999). Thomas Farrell uses a reflective assignment to promote critical reflection in a graduate course (called 'sociolinguistics as applied to language teaching') where students were encouraged to reflect not only on the materials and content they are exposed to, but also how the content of the course has impacted, and will continue to impact, them both professionally and personally in their first years and beyond as language teachers. All thirteen participants in the course noted the value of such a

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reflective assignment as a means of developing an awareness of self as a future teacher that they may not have been able to develop alone.

A second, and more direct, way of addressing the needs of novice teachers is to *add* a supplementary course, called 'Teaching in the First Years' (Farrell, 2009, 2012), that provides opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop skills in reflective practice so that they can better manage challenges, conflicts, and problems they may face in their first years of teaching. As Feiman-Nemser (2001: 1019) explains: "Preservice preparation is a time to begin forming habits and skills necessary for the ongoing study of teaching in the company of colleagues … serious conversations about teaching are a valuable resource in developing and improving their practice."

'Teaching in the First Years' could promote the development of skills in anticipatory reflection (reflection-for-action). This reflective approach supports Wright's (2010: 273) recent observations that SLT preparation should place "an emphasis on the student teacher's learning to teach, and becoming a thinking teacher" which "in turn means a great deal of reflective activity programmed into learning experiences." Such activities could include anything from a broad exploration and analysis of teacher beliefs and practices to a specific related focus on issues such as life histories, critical incidents, case studies, teacher metaphors, lesson study, classroom management, teacher identity development, and teaching practice (see Richards & Farrell, 2011, for details on these activities and many more). In addition to the above, changes brought about by technology have begun to challenge established beliefs and practices about teacher preparation. As Wong (2013: 248) has noted, language teachers these days "are not only expected to keep up with new technologies, but also to integrate IT into their curricula and classroom practices to equip students with the skills of the information age."

Regarding the broader exploration of teacher beliefs and practices, and not satisfied with the disjuncture he noted between what is taught on a teacher education programme and the realities which many practicing teachers face in classrooms when they teach, Simon Phipps combined two teacher education programmes, a practice oriented Delta (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults) and a MA programme based on contemporary thinking about teacher learning, in order to better integrate both theory and practice in a Turkish setting. Indeed, Wright (2010: 272) in his SOA review also pointed out the limitation of short courses like the CELTA because they "might inhibit the growth of reflective thinking and changes in beliefs about learning and teaching." So Phipps decided to merge two programmes together and noted that the new Delta/MA programme seemed to contribute to teacher learning because teacher learners could make links between theory and practice, between the "MA Linguistics/SLA" course and the Delta, and between reflective assignments/tasks on the MA and assessed teaching practice.

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Similarly and in order to account for the realities that teachers face once they graduate, John Macalister and Jill Musgrave used scenarios written by graduates of their TESOL program in New Zealand; each scenario selected a difficulty the graduate had encountered that prevented him or her from making use of the course principles he or she had studied before graduation. Then during class discussions they began the process of creating what they called "dissonance" or conflict between each student teacher's own language learning experiences and the course principles. As Macalister and Musgrave noted, their teacher learners found the scenarios very motivating and informative, and particularly for the teacher learners who were able to read about classrooms in a country where they hoped to teach. This idea meshes well with what Wright (2010) noted in his SOA article, that influencing teacher learners' beliefs about learning and teaching should be a primary goal of SLTE; Wright (2010: 271) observed: "not only are STs in transition to a new teacher identity, but their beliefs may also conflict with contemporary constructivist views of learning – hence the quest in SLTE for changed minds."

In a similar mode, and in order to create the realities of what teachers will face when they graduate, Jack Richards, a luminary in the field of second language teacher education, attempted to induct teacher learners into the principles and practices involved in writing course materials for use in countries that are members of SEAMEO – the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization. As Richards noted, many language teachers tend to be users of materials produced by others but often find they need to adapt materials to their local teaching context. Many, however, work in contexts where no published materials are available and need to develop materials for a course with a very specific local context. As a result, Richards developed different ways of engaging teachers in understanding how materials work, the design principles they reflect, and the procedures materials developers use in preparing materials and course books so that they could adapt and develop material for their own teaching contexts. As Richards noted, all of the course participants found the course very practical and useful for their future careers as language teachers.

This too was the case in a teacher education program in South Africa when Leketi Makalela noted that the main reading materials are taken from developed countries such as Australia and the US that assume that second additional language learners can use language proficiently as a means of self-expression. Makalela noted that because there was a lack of attention to the actual skills and knowledge of the teachers, as well as the lack of resourcing in remote rural areas of South Africa, he introduced a culturally responsive program with ESL pre-service teachers in order to facilitate development of reading in more than one language and so produce balanced biliterate readers. This is called "translanguaging" (or the purposeful juxtaposition of the languages of input and output). The goal of the program was to produce teachers with ESL teaching

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expertise that draws from home language resources. As a result, he observed that the innovation of "translanguaging" he introduced to pre-service teachers during teaching practice could provide the basis for training ESL teachers through a deliberate pedagogic strategy of word induction and contrastive reading methodology among pre-service student teachers in ESL contexts.

Just as Makalela questioned the validity of reading materials that have been taken from developed western countries for his context, so too Lubna Alsagoff, as Head of an English Department in the National Institute of Education (NIE), was faced with the broader issue of which target variety of English in terms of language teacher competencies given the multilingual and multicultural context of Singapore. While questioning the monolithic view of language teaching that focuses on the native variety as the norm and attempting to adopt policies that balance a global outlook with one that still values language as local practice, Alsagoff and her team at NIE addressed language proficiency issues holistically as part of the repertoire of skills teachers would need to become effective educators and be able to teach a variety of English that is valued internationally.

Recent changes brought about by developments in technology have also challenged established beliefs and practices in second language education. Indeed, a survey by Kessler (2007) of MA TESOL programmes suggests inadequate levels of preparation for using technology in the classroom and, as Wong (2013: 260) has noted, effectiveness of integration of any technology innovation is "closely linked to teachers' beliefs and pedagogical expertise." When IT fits into a teacher's beliefs, then its integration is more effective; however, when it does not, IT is not effectively integrated, as Helen Donoghue discovered when iPads came into classrooms in tertiary institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with no models or guidelines on how to use them as learning tools. When Donoghue studied the impact of this IT government initiative on those who were expected to administer this change, the teachers and their supervisors, she noted (just like Wong, 2013) that the teachers said they learned best through experience and talking to each other and so it is important that professional development includes opportunities to facilitate both. Donoghue also remarked that the teachers observed that their supervisors were not sufficiently experienced in the use of IT to observe and give feedback to the teachers.

Steve Mann outlines an innovation of how supervisors can use technology when providing feedback on a module called *Spoken English*, or in this case audio-feedback provided through screen capture software (called *Jing*) in a UK teacher education context. This, Mann said, allows a supervisor to simultaneously provide a visual focus and an auditory commentary. As Mann observed, this new type of screen capture software (SCS) allows the tutor to record and send a video that records on-screen actions and corresponding comments

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(through a microphone), while reading and annotating the original assignment on their computer screen.

The first year(s)

Although SLT educators are aware that novice teachers face many issues and challenges in their first years (Warford & Reeves, 2003), it is interesting to note that many TESOL programmes still have limited information about how their graduates are faring in their induction years, or even what their work lives involve (Baecher, 2012). Because of this paucity of knowledge about novice English language teachers' experiences, novice-service teacher education includes the provision for some form of contact to be maintained between SLT educators/programmes and schools, and novice language teachers after they have started their first years (Graves, 2009). Graves (2009) noted that collaborative relationships between teacher education institutions and schools in which teachers are placed must move beyond practicum placement so that novice teachers can make stronger professional links as they are socialized into the profession. Indeed, establishing more SLT education-school partnerships is also important for SLT preparation programmes because, in order to establish an effective knowledge-base for second language teacher education, SLT educators must have an adequate understanding of schools and schooling and the social and cultural contexts in which learning how to teach takes place (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Freeman and Johnson (1998: 409) state: "Studying, understanding, and learning how to negotiate the dynamics of these powerful environments in which some actions and ways of being are valued and encouraged whereas others are downplayed, ignored, and even silenced, is critical to constructing effective teacher education."

This SLT educator-novice teacher-school arrangement can be formal or informal. In a formal arrangement, SLT preparation programmes and the schools where the novice teachers are placed can collaborate when designing and implementing novice teacher induction programmes (Faez & Vaelo, 2012). As a SLT educator, Karen Johnson (2013: 76) attempted to link the theory/practice divide she noted is present in many SLTE programmes with a microteaching simulation through an extended team-teaching project that required teams of (three or four) teachers to teach a lesson in a real ESL course with the idea of "moving them toward greater self-regulation of theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices." This she suggests is a more realistic view of microteaching than is usually the case because the students are real rather than teacher learners.

Some schools and institutions do have their own induction programmes that include the provision of mentoring of novice teachers, but it may not be mandatory and it may not have a prescribed pattern of support and mentors may not get the proper recognition in schools (Mann & Tang, 2012). Mentor

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teachers may need training in how to explain what they know intuitively about teaching so that they can articulate this clearly to novice teachers, and this can be accomplished by more collaboration between the school and SLT programmes, which can help facilitate such training. If schools already have a mentor who covers TP, then they can probably assist the appointed novice teachers in their school as well. At the very least, Mann and Tang (2012) suggest that novice teachers need priority in timetabling to allow novices and their mentors to meet up to discuss aspects of their work, and observe each other's lessons. That said, Brannan and Bleistein (2012) have also noted that support from a mentor (which may be infrequent anyway) alone may not sufficient to meet the needs of novice teachers; rather, the combination of support from multiple sources (such as mentors, co-workers, and family) may be needed if they are going to survive their first years. As such, Brannan and Bleistein (2012) maintain that pre-service English language teachers should be educated in how to build a social support network and given strategies for developing mentoring and collegial relationships, as this can increase the quality of their teaching experience and lead to an increase in teacher efficacy beliefs during their first years.

If these formal relationships are not possible for whatever reason, it is still important for SLT educators to continue to monitor their novice teachers' development during the first years so that they can develop case studies of what really happens during these formative teaching years. In order to make these case studies *real* however, they should be generated by the novice teachers themselves, because as Elbaz (1988) has noted, there seems to be a gap between what teacher educators/researchers produce (and interpret) as reconstructions of novice teachers' knowledge and experience and the novices' own accounts and interpretations of what they experience. So, novice teachers should be encouraged to tell their own stories of the various issues and challenges they were faced with in their particular setting during their first years. Farrell (2006b) has suggested the use of a story structure framework of *orientation-complication-result* as one way of imposing some order on these stories/experiences so that novice language teachers can have a sense of structure when reflecting on their experiences. As Jalongo and Isenberg (1995: 162) have noted, this type of story framework can offer both pre-service and novice teachers a "safe and nonjudgmental support system for sharing the emotional stresses and isolating experiences of the classroom." Shin (2012) also discovered that the participants reported that sharing their stories had let them reflect on their teaching practices, and that they found such sharing empowering. SLT educators can then build up a corpus of such first years stories from a variety of different contexts and these case studies can be fed back into SLT preparation programmes for pre-service teachers to explore. Such *real* case studies can thus better inform the curriculum of SLT preparation programmes, and pre-service

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teachers can use them, as Wright (2010: 273) has noted, to reflect on their beliefs and narratives, and look "into the professional contexts of teaching and learning for which [they] are being prepared."

In addition, individual teacher educators can "follow" their novice teachers' development throughout their first years and provide support and feedback in different ways. For example, in a Chinese context, Xu Hao attempted to provide support and feedback for his novice teachers by attempting to stimulate novice teachers' pedagogical knowledge development through lesson study. As Johnson (2009) has noted, lesson study is teacher-directed, collaborative, non-evaluative and grounded in everyday classroom practices. Xu adopted lesson study cycles and activities where novice teachers in small groups collaborate with one another, discussing teaching objectives, planning an actual classroom lesson, observing how it works in practice, and then revising and reporting on the results so that other novice teachers can also benefit. As a result Xu noted that the novice-teacher participants developed their pedagogical knowledge, transformed their conceptions of sharing, obtained peer support, and activated their autonomy for self-directed professional development.

Conclusion

Although much has been accomplished in a relatively short period of time in the newish field of second language teacher education, the reality check is that we still have a long way to go when preparing our teacher learners for the realities they will face during their teaching careers. There is still a disjuncture between theory provided in SLT preparation programmes and practice in real classrooms, a gap that needs to be narrowed. One way of bridging this theory/practice divide that I outline in this introductory chapter is *novice-service language teacher education* to include teacher preparation (the "old" pre-service and so we eliminate that pre-service term) and the first year(s) of teaching. Novice-service teacher education begins in SLT preparation programmes where teacher learners are provided with opportunities to practice reflection during their existing courses. I have highlighted the need for the inclusion of a supplementary course that specifically explores and examines the first years of teaching. Such a course is also designed to support as Johnson (2009: 10) has noted, "the development of teachers' adaptive expertise." I have also called for greater SLT educator/program-school-novice collaboration so that SLT educators can not only help novice teachers but also learn more about, and eventually influence, the cultures of the schools in which their students are likely to be placed in the future. All of the chapters in this book fit into this novice-service model of teacher education and offer exciting innovations that teacher educators can adopt in their particular context which are presented in the order they appear in this introductory chapter.

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