



Surviving the transition shock in the first year of teaching through reflective practice



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ABSTRACT

No profession wants to admit that it 'eats its young' but research in general education has indicated that 24% of novice teachers leave teaching within the first year, 33% drop out after three years and between 40% and 50% leave within the first five years. This indicates that novice teachers may experience a difficult beginning to their teaching career. What is shocking in the field of TESOL is that we do not really know what novice ESL teachers experience in their first year of teaching, yet this knowledge is essential for both teacher educators and novice teachers alike if novice teachers are to successfully navigate this complex first year as a teacher. This paper outlines and discusses three female novice English as a second language (ESL) teachers' perceptions of their experiences during their first semester (14 weeks) of teaching in a university language school in Canada. Results indicate that in the absence of any real inductions program, the novice teacher reflection group they were members of helped the teachers better understand the many shocks they experienced so they could 'swim' rather than 'sink' in their first semester as ESL teachers.

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1. Introduction

Teaching is “the profession that eats its young” (Halford, 1998: 34) is a dramatic statement and of course, no profession wants to admit that it 'eats its young' but the number of novice teachers leaving the teaching profession seem to back this idea up: 24% drop out of teaching within the first year, 33% leave after three years and between 40% and 50% leave within the first five years (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). These are staggering percentages with many negative consequences for all concerned: novice teachers, students, administrators, ministries of education and teacher education programs. Here is one true story that brings these percentages to life:

Monica quit. One year of teaching was more than enough for her. She had looked forward to teaching for years and did quite well in all of her education preservice classes. But she couldn't take it anymore. When her principal questioned her decision, she told him it was the stress. He nodded, shook her hand, wished her luck, and led her to the door (Mandel, 2006: 66).

What is it about that first year that caused Monica to give up her dream of becoming a teacher considering the time, effort and money she and others have put into her training? After all Monica “dutifully went to all of the mandatory workshops” the district designed for new teachers such as “Aligning Your Curriculum to the State Standards” and “Analyzing Student Data to Achieve Proficiency on State Exams” (Mandel, 2006: 66). Perhaps then it was because she could not handle the students?

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However, as Mandel (2006: 66) noted, “It wasn’t the kids. Monica related well to her students and truly enjoyed most of her classes.” What she was frustrated most during her first year was the stress that “no one seemed to understand what she was going through; no one was there to help her survive that first year” with such basic issues as “how to set up her classroom on her first day or how to teach five hours of material in three hours” (Mandel, 2006: 66). More than likely the ideals about teaching that Monica has built up before and during her teacher education program had been replaced as Veenman (1984:143) has noted, “by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life.” As Mandel (2006: 66) suggests, Monica quit not because of problems with students or parents but because of “the inadequacies of today’s system of preparing and supporting new teachers” for the transition from the teacher education program to the reality of teaching in the first year(s).

The above example is one of many in general education as the numbers above suggest, but what about in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) profession?

Although as Mattheoudakis (2007: 1273) has pointed out, “the truth is that we know very little about what actually happens” to novice TESOL teachers during their first year of teaching, early research has suggested that the TESOL profession is also eating its young (as the title of this paper suggests) with reports of 50%–70% of TESOL teachers leaving within the first 3–5 years (Phillips, 1989). Similar research has also backed the idea that TESOL teachers are experiencing difficulties in their first year studies (e.g., Johnson, Harrold, Cochran, Brannan, & Bleistein, 2014; Farrell, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012; 2015).

Although the inadequacy of teacher preparation is pointed out by many scholars as being a main culprit for beginning teachers quitting, research suggests that it is the quality of the first year teaching that “is more important in retaining new teachers than either the quality of the teacher preparation program or the new teacher’s prior academic performance” (Peterson & Williams, 1998: 730). This “quality” of first year experience is further compounded in the fact that many novice TESOL teachers only receive temporary contracts as a kind of probation, the new reality in many countries including Canada (the context of this case study), which often results in such novice teachers receiving less attention or guidance from the administration who may be reluctant to invest time, energy or resources in induction programs or the like because they are considered as transient.

This paper examines the experiences of three female novice English as a second language (ESL) teachers during their first semester teaching in a university language school in Canada. Although it is good to provide more detailed information about the experiences of novice TESOL teachers in their first year of teaching (or details of the ‘eating of its young’), we as a profession must take the research one step further by also addressing how we can improve the experiences of novice teachers in reality. Thus this paper also outlines how the three female novice ESL teachers used a teacher reflection group to help them navigate through some challenging situations, and especially as they had no induction program in their working setting, during their first semester as novice teachers.

2. From trainee to novice teacher

Many novice teachers (and indeed many teacher educators, administrators and students) assume that once they have graduated from their teacher education programs all they will have to do is apply what they have learned during their first year of teaching. So most arrive at their new school excited, enthusiastic and full of energy or as Kaufmann and Ring (2011: 52) call them, “spark-plug go-getters”, and have high expectations as they begin to fulfil their long desired dream of becoming a teacher. From their very first day however, and unlike in many other professions, novice teachers are asked to carry out all of the same activities as their most experienced teacher colleagues. Once they hit the ground, novice teachers immediately become responsible for “the nuts and bolts of managing the classroom, developing effective lesson plans, addressing the standards, taking roll, collaborating with colleagues. The list is endless” (Redman, 2006: xii). So, from their very first day on the job they are thrown in at the deep end in a sink or swim ‘sink-or-swim’ type situation (Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986). Yet, unlike their most experienced colleagues, novice teachers have not had a chance to build up a repertoire of skills they can call on when attempting to take on the complete duties as a veteran teacher and so for many novices this transition comes as somewhat of a ‘shock’ (Corcoran, 1981).

Essentially during the first year of teaching, much of the ‘shock’ for novice TESOL teachers centers around their attempts to balance a difficult act between learning to teach (i.e. furthering their knowledge initiated during the teacher education program) while at the same time as developing their conceptions of ‘self-as-teacher’ or their identity as an ESL teacher within an established school culture. The transition shock from the teacher education program to the first year is further compounded by the unknown of a new context of teaching these new teachers must navigate. Thus for many novice teachers life becomes immediately hectic as they try to keep their heads above water. Within TESOL too novice teachers face similar challenges and anxieties during their first year that may lead to feelings of frustration, inadequacy, stress and/or isolation if they are not addressed (DelliCarpini, 2009). As DelliCarpini (2009) has noted, although novice TESOL teachers reported having high expectations on their first day of school, they soon discovered that the “dismal” conditions they were immediately faced with decreased their enthusiasm for work. DelliCarpini (2009: 6) revealed that the novice TESOL teachers in her study reported that from the very beginning they felt isolated because they had the feelings of “sink or swim on their own.” Some teachers begin to feel like failures because they cannot cope and feel so dejected that they leave the profession at enormous cost to all involved. Thus it becomes clear that only the most determined can survive their first year and without more support, we will continue to lose our best and brightest teachers (Farrell, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In recognition of the challenges that novice TESOL teachers inevitably face, and that novice teachers will need some kind of support, some schools have introduced induction programs and/or have appointed mentors in order to help novice teachers

during their first year of teaching. However, these induction programs have met with varying degrees of success and the mere appointment of a mentor to a beginning teacher in a school is no guarantee the teacher will be successfully socialized into the school (Farrell, 2009). For example, Brannan and Bleistein (2012) discovered that out of 30 novice TESOL teachers in the US they observed in their first year of teaching, four teachers were not appointed any mentor, thirteen had limited contact with the mentor that was appointed and only thirteen novice teachers had any regular contact. As one teacher commented, “as time goes on, my mentor meets my needs less and less” (Brannan & Bleistein, 2012: 530). Another example of a novice teacher who was considered ‘mentored’ after a few short meetings is reported in DelliCarpini (2009: 6):

I tried to find my mentor for the first two weeks. When I finally did, she said we would set up meetings. I saw her that time, once in May, and once in June and I was considered ‘mentored’. My door closed that first day and I was alone. I struggled with making decisions about what to teach

The above accounts of the negative experiences of ‘sink-or-swim’ type experiences of novice TESOL teachers suggests that in order to retain first year teachers they must be supported in some manner. However, not all schools offer induction programs or appoint mentors to help novice teachers navigate their first year. This is especially true, as pointed out earlier in this paper, when novice teachers are receive temporary contracts and receive little support from the administration. What happens to these part-time, considered to be temporary and transient yet also as potential later hires as full-time teachers once they have completed this period of ‘probation’? How do these (growing number of) TESOL teachers survive feelings of isolation and loneliness? How do we teacher educators and develop better facilitate novice TESOL teachers’ transition so that they can fulfil their prior dreams and hopes of becoming a teacher? Recently, Hiver (2016) examined the experiences of 19 novice language teachers over their first year teaching in South Korea and suggested that through the conceptual framework of ‘hope building’, novice teachers’ initial feelings of powerless, alienation and isolation (or feelings of hopelessness), could be regained over time. Thus in the spirit of hope building and a more positive oriented approach to novice teacher retention in difficult circumstances this paper not only outlines the experiences of three female ESL novice teachers during their first semester of teaching (and thus add to the paucity of such accounts), but also how they were able to survive their initial ‘shocks’ and some ‘aftershocks’ through their discussions in a novice teacher reflection group.

3. The study

3.1. Research methodology

The study utilized qualitative methods of research that include a case study approach (Merriam, 1988; Richards, 2003) that was exploratory and descriptive in nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The research also utilized an interpretivist perspective (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The use of case study methodology was chosen because it best facilitates the construction of detailed, in-depth understanding of what is to be studied, and because of the depth that is possible (Stake, 1995). In addition, case study can engage with complexity in a way that ‘cannot be adequately researched in any of the other common research methods’ (van Lier, 2005:195).

3.2. Context & participants

The teacher reflection group consisted of three novice female native English-speaking English as a second language (ESL) teachers all of whom had just commenced teaching in the same institution. All three novice teachers volunteered to meet in this group for one semester (14 weeks) in order to reflect on their practice together with a facilitator (this author). Each teacher had at the very least an initial qualification (e.g., TESL Certificate) in teaching ESL. All three were employed on a part-time basis in an institution that ran an ESL program for international students at all proficiency levels of English as a second language. Most of these students intended to enroll in full-time courses in the university that the institution was affiliated with after they had successfully completed their English language courses because many of the students had been granted conditional acceptance for some courses on condition that they pass the ESL program.

As group facilitator, I attempted as Osterman and Kottamp (2004: 95) have proposed for the role of a facilitator in a reflective practice group, to “create an environment that supports cooperative learning.” Thus throughout the reflection process I attempted to keep anxiety levels as low as possible by building an atmosphere of openness and trust. I shared my perceptions openly with the group as a participant-observer in the group discussions where appropriate; however, I did not reflect on my own teaching. Rather, I managed the process so that the teacher-participants could feel they had space in which to reflect on their own practice.

In order to protect the identity of the teachers I have not given them any titles or pseudonyms but rather report the role identities that emerged from the group discussions as a whole. The teachers are ‘named’ T1, T2, and T3 to keep their identities protected. I fully recognize that by not giving a full description of each teacher that this also leads to a sever limitation of the report but I do so for ethical reasons as they are only beginning their career. I assure the readers that the findings reported are very real.

3.3. Data collection

Data collection was over a one-semester period (14 weeks) that constituted the winter term of a school year in that institution. During that period all three novice teachers agreed to commit themselves to attend interviews and all group meetings. In terms of interviews, an initial interview was conducted before the group meetings commenced in order to illicit information about the novice teachers' life stories. All three novice teachers also attended open-ended interviews at the end of the period of group reflection in order to examine and clarify any themes or issues that emerged during the semester reflections and/or to capture any further first semester experiences of the novice teachers that did not come up during the group meetings (Kvale, 1996). The group also engaged in weekly discussions (12 in total) in which mutual understandings were constructed through talk (Mann, 2005). The group discussions followed Beaumont and O'Brien's (2000) suggestion of moving from chat to focused discussions that are specific to the participants' work. Each member was free to speak whenever they wanted and about whatever they wanted and all were free to give opinions throughout the group discussions. All group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Since the interviews were open-ended they along with the group discussions allowed participants to talk about a variety of topics pertaining to their first year teaching experiences.

3.4. Data analysis

When participants began to talk about similar topics (in the open-ended interviews and the group discussions), patterns began to emerge that illustrated the perceptions of the novice teachers and were then organized into themes related to their transition from their teacher education program (in) to their first year of teaching. In order to establish the trustworthiness of my findings, I (along with two graduate research assistants who were trained in the coding techniques) assessed the quality of the data by checking for its "credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 300). Lincoln and Guba (1985: 301) suggest that several activities can be engaged in to increase "the probability that credible findings will be produced." The first of these activities is prolonged engagement. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 301) define this as "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or the respondents, and building trust." As the study took place over an intensive 14-week period, this establishes sufficient time.

4. First shocks

The first shocks occurred on the very first day and then all during their first week on the job. On the first day all three novice teachers reported that they had not been made welcome when they walked in the door. As T3 remarked, "It's not welcoming. You don't feel like, 'Hey come on in. Thanks for joining the team. This is what's going on.' You have to find out a lot of things for yourself." T2 agreed and said, "I don't know who the [other] teachers are because I have not been introduced. None of us were introduced." T2 then said that in order for her to figure out what to do she had to try to listen to what other teachers were saying and pick up information at that time but for the most part she said: "I was becoming aware of similar feelings in being not welcome from the first day." T2 continued: "I overheard someone say: 'Oh this is what's going on.' Yeah it's definitely not a welcoming experience." T1 noted that when she was asked by someone in her family about her perceptions of the environment after her first week teaching there she said that she "felt completely lost."

Thus, all three novice teachers from their very first day experienced some kind of alienation because they did not feel welcomed and they realized that they would have to discover everything by themselves if they were to survive their first semester. As T3 noted, "You're just thrown in to survive yourself." So T1 remarked: "The first week felt frenzied because you didn't know if students were coming, or students weren't coming, and lots of that kind of switching around." In fact T1 said that during this first week she felt as if she was in a swamp: "The first week is like you're in a swamp." To which T3 said: "Yeah, exactly. Like you were on thin ice because you're figuring out what's going on, and then this week is like, okay we're into the deep water now, and it is kind of sink or swim."

More shocks were to occur before any of the three teachers walked into their classroom for the first time. One of these shocks for T1 occurred when she said that the textbook she was told she was going to use in one of her classes was suddenly changed before her first class even though she had already prepared lessons with this book in mind, and moreover, nobody had a copy of this new textbook because it had not arrived at that time. T1 said that she felt exasperated because when she was informed she was hired and what courses she would be teaching, she was also given a textbook so she could prepare in advance. T1 remarked: "Then on arrival I was given a different book than what I was told before and they didn't even have it."

Then T1 said that she had had to constantly 'nag them' to get a copy of the new book. T1 continued: "It took me a week of nagging such as asking: 'Where's my book? Where's my book? Then Friday [end of first week] the book shows up." With that she said that she informed her 'coordinator' that she could only begin preparation of new lesson plans based on this new book from the following week which situated her as she noted "uncomfortably behind in lesson planning." T1 continued: "I was shocked that they suddenly changed the book and also frustrated because they did not even have it and what was I going to do then with no book?"

Another early shock happened for T2 when she realized that she had not received any password to obtain access necessary programs used by the school and especially for obtaining class lists. T2 said: "I haven't got on to it [school program] because I have no password yet so I don't know what to do." T2 remarked that she was then given a hardcopy of the class lists but then realized that she would have to input all the names and student numbers into computer files by herself; T2 continued: "I don't

understand why the class list with their student numbers cannot be sent to us electronically, so we can add [to them], but it's not. We have to do that [administrative] work ourselves." T3 then remarked that her attendance sheets were not even correct: "My attendance sheets are a disaster ... all messed up, too because they had students missing. It's ridiculous especially since they use a good computer program anyway."

Up to this point as mentioned above the three teachers had not even walked into to their first class, but when they did, even more shocks were to occur. For example, when T3 walked into her classroom for the first time and said that she was shocked at the large class size; T3 remarked that the moment she walked in she "just stood in shock at the crowded classroom." T3 reflected later on this moment to the group: "I think I just had no clue about the class size because I was expecting to work with 10 or 12 students that it didn't occur to me that it would be 24 or 25. Oh wow, this is a lot of people." The other two novice teachers also remarked that although they may have been expecting to have a lot of students, when they first walked in they too felt a bit overwhelmed with the "full room" as T2 noted; she continued: "When I actually walked into the classroom I was a bit surprised with the full room because I was completely surrounded with students so I had to take a moment to gather myself."

To compound these shocks all three teachers noted that they did not know who they should talk to for guidance. T3 mentioned this when she said that one reason she did not know the other teachers in the school was that a staff meeting planned for the first week was suddenly cancelled without explanation; as T3 said: "We haven't even had a staff meeting yet [because it was cancelled], so we don't even know all the teachers." To which T1 responded: "It would be nice to meet, you know 'Hi. My name is ... and I teach ...'"

5. Aftershocks

Even after those first shocks that all three novice teachers experienced during their first week of teaching, more 'aftershocks' were to occur during their first semester. One of these 'aftershocks' occurred for all three novice teachers when they acknowledged that when they first arrived to teach they heard that the administration would allow them to be creative in terms of how they teach the prescribed curriculum, and how they go through the textbook and although they were required to produce weekly lesson plans for inspection, they heard they could also be creative with these as well. However, soon after they started to teach, they said that they realized that they felt that the administration seemed to be disorganized and this (disorganization) was especially frustrating for them (as novice teachers) because it tended to cause some uncertainty which in turn lead them to doubt their teaching sometimes.

For example, T1 said that she thought that having to submit daily lesson plans sounded good to her at first because as a novice she thought there would be not only "a sense of accountability, but also a sense of freedom to make my own lesson plans". However, T2 noted that their freedom to produce lesson plans was somewhat curtailed as the teachers had to produce a common lesson plan for the level they were teaching. For example, although T2 realized she should collaborate with the other teachers of that level when producing her weekly lesson plans, she also worried about having other teaching plans and teaching styles imposed on her as a result of common lesson plans. T2 said: "I don't mind collaborating for the purpose of expressing ideas, but I don't want to be the teacher next door. I want to be me, and I want to do my style." T2 remarked that one reason for her insistence to follow her ideas and teaching style was because of what she had learned in her teacher education program and courses; T2 continued: "That's what I went to school for. I didn't go to school to follow someone else's lesson plans; otherwise, why did I spend so much time developing my style." So T2 said that she decided to prepare two different lesson plans: her own lesson plan but to submit a different one for the group teaching that level.

The three novice ESL teachers' sense of isolation and frustration only increased as their first semester progressed as all three teachers noted that by the fifth week, they had not had any staff meetings with any other teachers, coordinators or the administration and were left completely on their own to "figure out things by themselves" (T2). For instance, they said that as the weeks went by during their first semester they did not know about how examinations were to be structured, or by whom or who would implement them. Then as the mid-term exam time approached (as written in the syllabus they were given at the beginning of the semester) they began to panic; As T3 remarked,

I have not prepared my midterm exam yet, which is happening next week although I have it in my mind what I want them to do. But no one has said to me, 'You have to hand in your midterms for us to preview' or 'We need them by this date' or whatever. We haven't had a meeting yet, ever.

In agreement, T1 said that while she perceived that her classes were working well, she did not know who to talk to about the exam system that she was confused about but that she was supposed to follow; T1 said: "I am very frustrated when it came to making exams because accordingly we have to submit an exam."

The issue of who they ask for advice became even more acute as the semester continued. Indeed, all three novice teachers noted that on the last week of their first semester that they still had had no staff meeting during that semester. T3 reflected: "We did not have a meeting even about midterms, so I don't even know what to do with marks actually. I don't know where to send them." To which T2 said that she thinks these meetings are very important for her to talk about particular issues and get some guidance. T2 continued: "These are not little because they make your life impossible. There is probably no point now in having a meeting during the last week." To which T1 added while laughing: "Maybe next semester if we all get hired back we'll have a meeting." The other two teachers laughed but also rolled their eyes.

6. Surviving the first year

All three novice teachers were surprised at what they experienced from their first day on the job, and felt that they were not prepared adequately with how to deal with such transition ‘shocks’ (e.g., no welcome, sudden change of textbook, no computer passwords, large class size) and ‘aftershocks’ (e.g., disorganized administration concerning lesson planning, examinations, accountability) that they experienced during their first semester. Although the introduction of a formal induction program would be an obvious suggestion to smoothen the transition of these three novice teachers to this school, ultimately it is the responsibility of the school/institution (who may be reluctant to pay for it—see above) in which the novice teacher is appointed. As these novice teachers were on part-time contracts, the school choose not to have any induction program and did not appoint any mentors for them. Thus, TESOL as a profession must ask itself what can be done to help these struggling novice ESL teachers who may be on part-time contracts *swim* rather than *sink*.

All indications are that the three novice ESL teachers used the group meetings to break from their isolation because they had no others in which they could really go to for advice during their first semester. The novice ESL teacher reflection group referred to in this case study followed a process in which the novice teachers were provided a way to regularly and systematically reflect on their first semester experiences in a supportive, collegial environment that was free from evaluation. Such novice teacher reflection groups involve teachers as [Humaira and Rarieya \(2008: 270\)](#) noted, “Undertaking an inquiry into their practice through verbally sharing, discussing, questioning and reasoning about their teaching experiences, either with their peers and/or a reflective coach.” In this case the group was supported by this author in the role of group facilitator.

In terms of process, the three novice ESL teachers set up a teacher reflection group in part because they felt the need to talk about their experiences as each member was feeling lost during their first week. All three novice teachers said that they found the group meetings very helpful. For example, T1 said: “I found it useful to meet just to bounce ideas off of like because they’re in the same position, so we could bounce ideas. I felt like actually we’re reflecting on the teaching. I go home and I’m nice and happy. I don’t have to complain to my husband about no meetings and all that stuff.” T2 noted that meeting in a group and talking about issues allowed her to hear her colleagues’ ideas and get feedback from them; as T2 noted:

I liked hearing other ideas. I liked just getting some feedback when I said, ‘Oh, this isn’t working in my class.’ Just to know that sometimes we were going through the same thing like, you know we were frustrated with the administration. We were frustrated with sometimes the students or whatever. So I think that’s kind of nice because we created an opportunity to talk about ... you don’t always have that opportunity in your office with a group of teachers.

T3 said that it was difficult for her to talk to the other teachers in the school because they always seemed busy when she wanted some information; T3 said: “I did talk to other teachers [outside this group] but it’s not set up that you’re, some of them are marking.” This is a problem because as [Feiman-Nemser \(2003: 29\)](#) has observed, “Without easy access to one another, teachers may feel reluctant to share problems or ask for help, believing that good teachers figure things out on their own.” What usually occurs in many schools, as T3 noted above, is that experienced teachers tend not to want to interfere with novice teachers with the idea that they are too busy anyway, and so they do not share their experiences with the novice teachers.

Thus novice teachers feel isolated and this isolation really damages their sense of belonging to a profession. As [Brandt \(2005: 21\)](#) notes: “Teacher isolation is a salient problem for all teachers, but the lack of collegiate interaction is especially relevant to novice teachers.” Thus, it is important to have conversations with novice teachers during their first year and a novice teacher reflection group that is set up within a school seems to be the best way to go about this. As for having all three teachers from the same intuition reflect together in one group, T1 noted that this was an advantage; she said: “It actually worked out really well having all three people from the same, from the same program.” In addition, because they were from the same institution they noted that they have become closer as a result of meeting regularly because this would not be the case if they had just met casually in the staff room in the usual manner; T1 said: “I also found that I created friendships.”

Thus, the results of this case study suggest that the formation of a novice ESL teacher reflection group during their first semester of teaching greatly facilitated their transition to becoming a novice teacher. Of course, novice teachers can form similar groups in their schools but these type of groups can be strengthened too if they have the support of the administration. For example, the administration could on the opening day of the school year inform all their novice teachers that such groups are available in their school on a voluntary basis. They should be informed that they will gain valuable knowledge and support from all in the school and as such will feel more welcome to that community, an important issue raised in the case study reported on in this paper. In addition, it is essential that the novice teachers are informed and assured that they will not be evaluated as teachers in any way during their participation in the group. It would also be nice if the novice teachers were given a reduced workload as a result of participation in the group so they are given time to have a successful transition. In fact, administrators could also be informed that many other professions are given such time to make a transition such as baseball, military and so on ([Turow, 1977](#)). As [Turow \(1977: 9\)](#) has noted:

In baseball, it’s the rookie year. In the Navy, it is boot camp. In many walks of life there is a similar time in trial and initiation, a period when newcomers are forced to be the victims of their own ineptness and when they must somehow master the basic skills of the profession in order to survive.

Finally, because all three teachers were on temporary contracts, the results of this case study (the shocks and aftershocks experienced by the novice teachers) also suggests that such an informal entry into the TESOL profession is not conducive to

the full development of these teachers. On the other hand, the only way all three novice teachers (and many other novice teachers I suspect) could ever wish to obtain a continuing contract is by taking on as many temporary fixed-term contracts as they can manage. This means they must take on volunteering duties whether they want to or not (as was the case for all three novice ESL teachers reported on here) and even unreasonable workloads and more than likely avoid complaining about anything to make sure they are not seen as teachers who will be difficult as future colleagues especially if they ever hope to become full-time teachers in that institution. Perhaps we as a profession must decide to band together and stop these unreasonable practices of hiring novice TESOL teachers on part-time contracts so that we give them more hope about their future careers as we take better care of our young or in other words we must work harder to keep Monica.

7. Conclusion

This paper has reported on the experience of three novice ESL teachers during their first semester teaching in a Canadian context. As a result I realize that some may suggest that it is difficult to make generalities from this case study of just three novice ESL teachers in Canada because each novice teacher will have a different experience in a different context. However, it should be noted that the small sample size of three ESL teachers was intended to allow for careful examination of their transition experiences and how a novice teacher reflection group helped them transition and as a result can help support other novice ESL teachers as they make the transition. What is really shocking in the field of TESOL is that there are not many accounts of the experiences of novice ESL teachers in their first year of teaching, yet this knowledge is essential for both teacher educators and novice teachers alike so that they will be able to successfully navigate this complex first year as a teacher. So I hope the results of this case study can contribute not only to the knowledge of what ESL novice teachers actually experience during their first year, but also encourage others to conduct similar research in different contexts so we can accumulate as much knowledge as possible on what constitutes novice ESL teacher first year experiences.

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