Quality Teacher Educators = Quality Teachers? Quality Standards for TESOL Teacher Educators.

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Abstract

Identifying and discussing the quality requirements and specific professional competences for teacher educators as well as their professional concerns and challenges constitute the core issue of this chapter. Are teacher educators well prepared to teach prospective ESOL teachers (ETs) in today's challenging and ever-changing education? However policymakers and stakeholders may be aware of the importance of such an issue, there seems to be a need for greater recognition of teacher educators all around Europe (European Commission, 2013). This chapter first places emphasis on the professional profile required by TESOL teacher educators (TTEs) according to present European guidelines, particularly on their new professional roles, responsibilities, and challenges. The question arises as to whether defining better academic requirements in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes would necessarily lead to a form of standardization of teacher educators' training or status. Three examples of master's degree programs guaranteeing the acquisition of high-level skills including research methodology will illustrate that there is no need to standardize training. Still, a rich educational framework may not be sufficient. Finally, we will reflect on the importance of attitudes and human values, with a special emphasis on the power of encouragement, if we are to really improve language education in the 21st century.

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Introduction

In 2013, the European Commission published a report entitled "Supporting Teachers Educators" (2013) based on the work of the Thematic Working Group "Teacher Professional Development", which was comprised of experts nominated by 26 European countries and stakeholder organizations. The report highlighted the necessity to improve the recognition of the seminal role of teacher educators for the future of education in European countries. Among the obstacles emphasized was the lack of clear identity of those who are supposed to play that part: Should they be good practitioners only or should they have a high level of qualification in both academic and didactic knowledge? Can we define a professional profile for TESOL teacher educators (TTEs from now on) in particular? In order to answer these questions, we will first elaborate on a suitable profile in terms of academic and professional knowledge and skills, which may turn out to be multifaceted rather than monotypic. Then we will briefly present three master's degree programs for TTEs recently implemented in France and see how they tend to reconcile the two

traditional, antagonistic types of training—academic and practical—by adopting a bottom-up approach and envisaging higher stakes. Yet these standards may not be sufficient to provide a guarantee of quality. Human qualities and in particular the capacity to provide encouragement may indeed be the key factors if TTEs are to really contribute to supporting ESOL teachers (ETs from now on) and improving language education in the 21st century.

An Ideal Professional Profile of TESOL Teacher Educators

The European Community publication "Supporting Teacher Educators" (2013) provides information on the requirements recently implemented in some European countries. For instance, in Sweden all teacher educators working at universities are now required to have a PhD. Formal university education programs have also been introduced in Hungary, for instance, and in Finland (one special 90 ECTS[1] program in the master of arts degree). We will focus on the criteria developed by the Irish Teaching Council, which include:

•   a qualification at a higher level than the one being taught.

•   teaching experience in the relevant sector (primary or post-primary).

•   research activity as for supporting theory-practice integration.

•   registration with the Teaching Council (European Commission, 2013, p. 19).

Although the report mentions that these criteria need not be met by all teacher educators, the Irish Education authorities seem to consider that teaching experience is not enough: a research project is needed as well as a higher qualification (though potentially limited) and official registration.

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More strikingly, the Irish Teaching Council identified a set of competences and attitudes that school-based teacher educators should be able to display, such as being "good communicators", "good role models", or "committed to high standards of professional practice and conduct"; they must also "be willing to commit time and effort in developing newly qualified teachers" and "be open to being observed by other teachers" during class.

From this, we can define three different categories of requirements for teacher educators: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

In terms of knowledge and skills, is a qualification "at a higher level than the one being taught" sufficient? Should TTEs have a BA, an MA, or even a PhD in the language concerned? The very question contains part of the answer, i.e., that all sorts of TTEs can exist depending on how they have ceased to be ordinary teachers to become teacher educators through inductive/probation development. More and more European countries have adopted the Bologna process and placed the level of qualification for language teachers at a master's degree. This sets the standards higher for TTEs who, as experienced teachers, may not possess that level of qualification. Yet, it appears that if research is meant to play an important part to improve teaching on a larger scale, then TTEs should be qualified at no less than the master's level, either by actually completing their academic training at university or through a system of professional equivalence. If the European recommendations are to be followed *stricto sensu*, they should indeed be qualified both in language studies (as language teachers themselves) and in teacher education proper.

However, acquiring a high level of academic skills often leads to withdrawing from the daily challenges of the language class. Language teachers with a PhD generally work at universities and may not be able to provide "school-based" training.

Could it be that no ideal teacher educator can combine all the competences listed above?

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Here is a tentative table that aims at matching the expected levels of qualification according to four standards: language proficiency, academic and didactic knowledge, research methodology, and teaching skills.

Table 23.1 Expected levels of proficiency for language/TESOL teacher educators

Type of TTE	Level of qualification	Language proficiency	Academic and didactic knowledge	Research methodology	Teaching skills
TTE1	BA and a minimum of 5 years teaching experience	average B1 + B2	average	none	high
TTE2	MA in the subject	high C1	high	average	low
TTE3	MA in the subject and a qualification as a teacher	high C1	high	average	average
TTE4	MA in the subject and a qualification as a teacher, and 5 years teaching experience	high C1	high	average	high
TTE5	PhD in the subject	high C2	high	high	low (for secondary schools)

This table suggests that no TTE possesses a high level in all four domains.

TTE1 may only show an intermediate level in the foreign language and very little of a researcher's attitude. Still, she would certainly provide good companionship and great help for her teacher trainee to improve her teaching skills on a daily basis. Conversely, it cannot be presumed that TTE5 with a high degree of academic and didactic knowledge acquired at university or even a PhD in language education will be able to give the ET concrete advice.

However, precisely because these two types of TTE possess different qualities, they can work together in complementarity. As for TTE 2, 3, and 4, they will possess a good language proficiency and academic skills but may lack terrain or research expertise.

Of course, the development of action research and the rising figure of the researcher-practitioner (Narcy-Combes, 2005) have slightly modified the perspectives on this issue. As more and more young colleagues hold both the professional skills of language teachers and those of researchers, we can but hope for a raise in the overall quality of language education.

In sum, one may say that even though the European Community legitimately strives at unifying competencies, diplomas, and status of TTEs for very valuable reasons, one must insist on the necessity to preserve a certain plurality of ways and thoughts. It seems to us that multi-category TTEs can provide a richer quality of teacher training within an institution.

Still, their differences in status (primary/secondary schoolteachers, university lecturers, education engineers) and the rapid changes in national policies may also have an impact on their attitude.

For instance, a low level of recognition for the additional workload in terms of salary or career development may cause a progressive disengagement of TTEs. This aspect shouldn't be underestimated. In France, the inspectors in charge of recruiting tutors for novice teachers among experienced language teachers can now be turned down, which never happened in the past.

Recently, the Rectorat (local educational authorities), the ÉSPÉ/INSP (schools of education), and some universities have been able to initiate a strong collaboration with the help of the Ministry of Education. As a matter of fact, the master's degree for teacher education called MEEF can be developed in four study programs:

- primary schoolteachers.

- secondary schoolteachers.

- principal educational advisers.

- teacher educators.

This fourth program interests us in particular. We will rely on three representative examples of these master courses recently implemented in France.

Three Masters Courses in Language Education Engineering

Since 2018, INSP[2] of Paris (higher school of education)[3] offers experienced teachers the possibility to obtain a master's degree in education in two years (M1 & M2, 160 to 240 hours per year). It is primarily geared to teacher trainers and teacher educators who want to ensure academic recognition of their qualifications.

The Master DIDALAP (didactique des langues dans les activités professionnelles—language didactics for professional activities) at Université Fédérale de Toulouse-Midi Pyrénées and INSP Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées[4] is meant for ESP (English for specific purposes) or SSP (Spanish for specific purposes) teacher trainers. It articulates field skills in teaching and thorough training in FLT research in two years (M1 & M2).

The Master PIF—Art'Enact of Université Paris Créteil and INSP of Créteil[5] (M2 only) is the first professional degree in France to offer a transdisciplinary training for teachers, educators, artists, and mediators. It is indeed totally different from the other two in that it relies on the powerful theory of enaction initiated by the Chilean neuroscientist Francisco Varela. It deals with ART[6] practices in an ENACTive[7] ecology of learning, involving emotions and the corporeity of learning.

It is to be noted that all three master's degrees insist that future teacher educators be "practitioners-researchers" in a promising attempt to provide the missing link between field experience, language proficiency, and research theorization.

Still, high-quality teacher education is not only a matter of knowledge and skills. It also relies on attitudes.

The Power of Encouragement

Mentoring,**8** tutoring, or training student teachers involves professional gestures that require as much training and expertise as the other standards. We will focus here on the power of encouragement.

What Is Encouragement?

Very little has been written on the subject in ET's training, even less in TTE's training. Timothy Evans, relying on Carlson et al.'s (1992) as well as on Adler's (1964) work, wonders how we can train teachers to encourage their students. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary gives the following definition of the word "encourage":

1a: to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope: hearten . . .

b: to attempt to persuade: urge . . .

2: to spur on: stimulate . . .

3: to give help or patronage to: foster . . .

Indeed, a recent study by Alcott (2017) has shown an important impact of teacher encouragement on students, especially on those facing attendance issues. Other studies (McHarg et al., 2007; Moogan, 2011; Reay, 2013) adopt the same sociological or educational point of view considering teacher encouragement as a means to increase and diversify access of students to higher education. Thus, they relate to meaning 1b: to urge, or 2: to stimulate, or 3: to foster. Still, meaning 1a: to hearten is not often mentioned except by Adler (1964), the famous Austrian psychotherapist (1870–1934), who perceived the strong connection of encouragement with the inner spirit. His biographer reports:

> Encouragement at any price was the key of his treatment. Adler never encouraged without laying open the problem for the solution of which courage was to be used. Not encouragement in itself, but balance of encouragement and responsibility was Adler's formula, if formula there has to be. Therefore, he avoided pointing out to the patient tasks which he knew too difficult for him. His encouragement, furthermore, never meant simply: go ahead, you are all right", but "go ahead, if you try very hard you will do it" (Miller, 1994; in Adler, 1964, pp. 358–359).

What is the relationship between this and the educational field? Harlan and Leyser's case study (1980) showed that teachers tended to provide more encouragement to physically or mentally impaired children than to non-impaired ones. But shouldn't we acknowledge that all children deserve to be heartened in their efforts in order for them to take full responsibility of their progress?

It seems to us that this goal can be better achieved through a domino effect: Teacher educators should be trained to encourage teachers to encourage their pupils. Alcott writes, "In this way, training will build bridges between the teachers' daily work lives and their conceptual understanding" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991, cited by Evans, 1993, p. 81).

Encouragement should also be distinguished from praise. Praise has to do with worth. It can sometimes become counterproductive if it is overused or if it induces comparisons between students. As early as in the 1970s, Rowe (1974) even found that praise could lower the number of responses given by the students (as if praise had a conclusive effect). Conversely, encouragement could instead have an incentive effect, initiating responses among learners. The greatest advantage of encouragement over praise in the context of teacher training is that, to quote Miller in a medical context (1994), it is "a form of non-evaluative feedback". The problem is that more often than not, teacher educators have to assume both roles, as trainers and assessors. Hence the confusion and the difficulty to adopt a genuinely encouraging attitude, free of all judgement. Here is the definition of encouragement proposed by Wong (2014, p. 182):

> At its most basic level, encouragement is the expression of affirmation through language or other symbolic representations to instill courage, perseverance, confidence, inspiration, or hope in a person(s) within the context of addressing a challenging situation or realizing a potential.

What is remarkable in Wong's definition is the emphasis on the medium through which encouragement is conveyed.

Encouragement in Teacher Education

If we are to train ETs to be encouraging to their students both in gestural and verbal attitudes, we should highlight this in TTE training. Evans says, "Half the job of encouragement lies in avoiding discouragement" (Evans, 1996, p. 82). Quoting Evans (1989) and Dinkmeyer and Eckstein (1993), he puts forward five ways of discouraging students:

• "Setting high expectations or unreasonable standards.

- Focusing on mistakes to motivate.

- Making pessimistic interpretations.

- Comparing people.

- Dominating by being too helpful."

Anyone who has ever been involved in novice teacher education, especially, has necessarily encountered these five characteristics. If we are to learn from them, why not elicit their counterparts:

- Setting appropriate expectations and reasonable standards.

- Focusing on strong points to motivate.

- Making optimistic interpretations.

- Considering each teacher as being in the right place doing the right job independently of the rest of the group.

- Being supportive.

These five "recommendations" could apply to all types of teacher educators (see Table 23.1) but more particularly to those who are not given the opportunity to create a day-to-day relationship with their mentees. One can also go further and adopt the Wong's Tripartite Encouragement Model (TEM) (2014, 191):

Table 23.2 Adapted from Wong's Tripartite Encouragement Model (2014)

Facet 1: foci of encouragement	
1. challenged-focused	2. potential-focused

Facet 2: Features of effective encouragement		
1. Framing of encouragement message	2. Perceived trustworthiness of encourager	3. Perceived credibility of encouragement

Facet 3: Levels of encouragement		
1. Interpersonal communication.	2. Character strength	3. Group norm

This model seems particularly adapted to the TTE situation, as the following section will show.

Experience Report

Indeed, I experienced a tremendous change in a teacher training school at one time in my career where Facet 3 in Wong's model would have better been labeled "Levels of Discouragement". The interpersonal communication (Facet 3.1.) between TTEs and novice ETs was more often than not very low-inspiring. We had very little capacity to encourage, and the French tradition (Facet 3.3. "group norm") led us to focus on the ET's failures. Around Christmas, only four or five ETs out of 50 got a high grade on their first assessment visit. The situation was so disheartening that the next year we decided to become TESOL Encouragers. This period was marked by conflicting feelings, some of us being bound to their traditional way of doing. Still,

we stuck to our resolution and prepared questionnaires to get the ET's feedback on our action as TTEs. After only three months, we were surprised to see that two thirds of the trainees had gained great professional skills. This could be due to a particularly outstanding ET promotion, but the same phenomenon could be observed in the following years. In fact, whatever our TTE status, we had made two decisions regarding the advisory visit (in October) and the first assessment visit (in December):

• Provide the trainees with positive feedback (even if the lesson was poorly led) and adopt a strongly encouraging tone (Facet 1, Facet 3.2 of Wong's TEM).

• Provide advice only if the trainee asked for it. If that was to be the case, then, we would make sure not to use negative linguistic forms in our speech (Facet 3.1). For instance, instead of saying "you haven't made a good use of the whiteboard" or "the pupils aren't given enough opportunity to speak", we would say, "If you are asking for advice, I would suggest that you use the whiteboard in such a way" or "Let's figure out what kind of activity could increase spoken interaction among your pupils".

During the training classes, we could of course show them various ways of improving their practice (Facet 1.1; 1.2), but this was done in group and no one would be made to feel ill at ease. This experience initiated a Copernican revolution not only in the training, but also in our mode of assessment. We started to think differently, and because we were thinking differently, we also perceived the trainees' practices in a more positive way. It was as if we had changed lenses. Furthermore, the answers they provided us in the questionnaires were encouraging. Not only had we become great encouragers, but the trainees had, too, in a boomerang effect. Indeed, their receiving genuine encouragement (Facet 2 of Wong's TEM) instead of smart criticism made them feel more confident, and they started trusting their abilities to teach and actually

improved their skills. We had experienced the power of encouragement that lies in the reciprocity of the relationship. Eventually, together with the ETs, we had transformed a vicious circle into a virtuous one.

Conclusions

To conclude, we can now provide some answers to our initial questions. Should teacher educators be good practitioners only or should they have a high level of qualification in both academic and didactic knowledge? How should a professional profile for TTE in particular be defined? First of all, we would like to say that there is no such thing as an ideal TTE and that it is not necessarily desirable to define a typical profile for teacher educators (see section "What Is Encouragement"). Indeed, this would considerably reduce the richness of training. Teacher educators should be given the opportunity to valorize their specific backgrounds and unite their skills in multidimensional academic training programs (see section "Encouragement in Teacher Education"). Indeed, if support is to be expected from policymakers and educational authorities, the focal point should rather be on strengthening the connection between research in language education and fieldwork than on imposing top-down structural reforms. Still, whatever the quality of academic and field training and the virtue of combining practice and research, it is essential to refocus on the very meaning of our mission, namely, the education of the next generation. That is why we must give a special place to human qualities and to the real needs of each child. After all, encouragement can be viewed as a mode of social interaction in line with Vygotsky's constructivist theory. Praise will be all the more appreciated by the learner when he has made real efforts to succeed. Encouraging means inspiring and may be more demanding than acquiring academic knowledge or skills, because it implies that the encouragers themselves have

hope in the future. In the end, high-quality teacher educators may well mean teacher educators of high scientific, professional, and human quality.

Proposals for Quality Improvement

- A rich diversity of approaches in TESOL teacher education must be advocated by educational authorities.

- Quality education calls for fruitful collaboration among multi-category TESOL teacher educators.

- Action-research on the power of encouragement needs to be fostered.

- Indicators of quality In TESOL teacher education should recognize human quality as the core ingredient.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- How many master's degrees for language teacher educators are there in Europe?

- What general or specific training do they provide?

- How is research action conducted for teacher educator training?

- Are there recent case studies on encouragement in teacher training and teacher educator training?

Notes

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[1] European Credit Transfer System.

[2] INSP (Institut National Supérieur du Professorat) is the new acronym for ÉSPÉ (École Supérieure de Professorat et d'Éducation). The following web site addresses will change accordingly at the end of 2019.

[3] ÉSPÉ de Paris, Sorbonne Université, master PIF de formation de formateurs : www.espe-paris.fr/article/parcours-formation-formateurs

[4] ÉSPÉ de Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées, master DIDALAP: http://espe.univ-toulouse.fr/accueil-/formation/pratiques-et-ingenierie-de-la-formation/master-meef-didactique-des-langues-dans-les-activites-professionnelles-didalap-435460.kjsp?RH=FR_02

5 ÉSPÉ de l'Université Paris-Créteil, master PIF - Art'Enact: http://espe.u-pec.fr/formation/l-espe-ouvre-un-nouveau-parcours-de-master-meef-art-enact--877015.kjsp

6 Art = artistic. The artistic practices involve physical activities such as acting, dancing, performing the language in various ways.

7 The enactivists rely on the concept of "embodied cognition" and promote learning activities based on the creative interaction between the subject and his environment

8 The terms used in France are quite significantly different from those used in the Anglo-American countries. For secondary schools, we usually have tutors (in the school) and trainers (at the school of education).