

Professional Development in TEFL: The Case for HRD

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Abstract

This paper reviews peer-reviewed scholarly articles relating to the professional development of teaching English as a foreign language in six national contexts. The author uses a human resource development lens rather than a continuing professional education or staff development one to clarify issues in professional development and suggest ways for meeting challenges and problems of teachers of English as a foreign language. Key concepts in human resource development, such as training and development, organizational development, and career development, provide windows for understanding the parameters of professional development. Furthermore, these concepts clarify gaps in the literature regarding critical reflection, informal learning, terminology, cross-contextual research, and systems approaches. These gaps suggest new directions for research in professional development for teachers of English as a foreign language.

Introduction

English has increasingly become the *lingua franca* of business, diplomacy, science and academics, etc. This has led to reforms in English as a foreign language (EFL) curricula around the world (Graddol as cited in Wall, 2008), and the increasing importance of professional development (PD) for EFL teachers in public schools (Wall, 2008; Hu, 2005; Im, 2001). PD is especially relevant for teachers who are not native speakers of English and, as such, must continue to master English as well as develop their teaching skills (Wall, 2008).

PD for EFL teachers in public schools, as with teachers of other subjects, has traditionally been viewed from a continuing professional education (CPE) or staff development (SD) perspective. More recently, however, focus on the role of critical reflection has resulted in a shift toward a collaborative professional development perspective (Dirkx & Austin, 2005). Though these perspectives are widely accepted, I feel viewing PD through a human resource development (HRD) lens, in particular a training and development (T&D) and/or organizational development (OD) lens, may help shed light on current issues as well as future directions for PD of EFL teachers in public schools. A shift in perspective may also lead to a clearer understanding of provider and organizational issues.

Quite a number of scholarly articles have been written about PD for EFL teachers in public schools; however, the topic is not as mature as one might expect. Therefore, an integrative literature review of the topic, particularly one through an HRD lens, may provide the field with clearer understanding of issues surrounding it. Specifically, is there consensus about what constitutes PD for EFL teachers in public schools? What are challenges and problems in PD for EFL teachers; are they consistent across contexts? How can using an HRD lens to look at PD clarify issues in it for EFL teachers in public schools and help meet challenges and problems? I intend to answer these questions through an integrated review of scholarly articles. I will identify similarities, contradictions, and gaps in the literature as well as make suggestions for improving PD for EFL teachers.

Professional Development

Teachers are professionals (Podeshi, 2000). Thus, PD for teachers can be categorized as CPE. CPE is defined as “the education of professional practitioners... that follows their preparatory curriculum and extends their learning throughout their careers... [it]

enables practitioners to keep abreast of new knowledge, maintain and enhance their competence, progress from beginning to mature practitioners, advance their careers through promotion and other job changes, and even move into different fields” (Queeny as cited in Queeny, 2000, p. 375). The purpose of CPE is to “certify and improve professional knowledge and practice” (Sleezer, Conti, & Nolan, 2004, p. 21). Cervero (as cited in Dirx & Austin, 2005) points out that fostering critical reflection is part of this process.

SD has been defined as “an activity or process intended to help educators improve their skills, attitudes, knowledge and/or performance in their roles” and usually occurs in the workplace (Dirx & Austin, 2005, p. 6). Other scholars (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) define SD as “those processes that improve the job-related knowledge, skills, or attitudes of school employees”. As with CPE, critical reflection is a key element in SD and points to a larger goal than just individual development: “[Reflective practice] is individuals working to improve organizations through improving themselves” (Osterman and Kottkamp as cited in 2005, p. 6).

HRD is “heavily influenced by the context in which it is studied and practiced... context is determined by culture, which varies from nation to nation and organization to organization” (McLean & McLean, 2001, p. 319). Thus, it may be difficult to define HRD. However, it can be described as “a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 4) or as “any process or activity that... has the potential to develop adult’s work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction...” (McLean & McLean, 2001, p. 322).

Training and development (T&D) is the largest realm of HRD activity and is “a process systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise in light of improving performance” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 226). Development is viewed as “the planned growth and expansion of knowledge and expertise of people beyond the present job requirements” (Swanson as cited in Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 226). Organizational development (OD), another aspect of HRD, is “a system-wide application of behavioral and social science knowledge...to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organizational performance” (p. 288). Indeed, one of the greatest differences between CPE and HRD is the latter’s focus on the organization: “HRD is not limited to improving individual knowledge and practice but, instead, seeks to improve satisfaction, learning, and performance across and within multiple levels of complex systems (Sleezer et al., 2004, p. 24).

Though descriptions of SD and CPE fit the parameters of PD in EFL, they are sometimes less explicit than HRD literature regarding two elements that are key goals for teachers of EFL: expertise and performance. The development of expertise is of “primary interest and utmost importance in HRD” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 257) and leads to improved performance. Therefore, if one of the goals of PD for EFL teachers is the development of expertise (Lohman & Woolf, 1998) and through it improved performance, it makes sense to look at PD from an HRD, or more specifically a T&D perspective.

Furthermore, as PD is usually sponsored by the educational organizations in which EFL teachers work (Watts, 1994), and occurs in the workplace or in-service, it holds to reason that the goal of PD is not only improving individual performance but also organizational performance. A school is a “social system composed of interconnected parts” (Lohman & Woolf, 1998, p. 282); therefore, it makes sense to look at PD from an OD perspective as well. This argument is solidified by the importance of critical reflection in SD as mentioned above: Van Woerkom (2004) posits “the concept of critical reflection... seems to be a bridge between individual learning and organizational learning” (p. 178). Furthermore, as Rummier and Brache (as cited in Lohman and Woolf, 1998) argue, the reasons or causes for a majority of performance problems can be found in the environment not the individual. In order to promote an environment more conducive to learning and hence improved performance, there must be a “shift in focus from individual learning to organizational learning” (p. 287).

Therefore, it appears possible and helpful to view PD for EFL teachers through an HRD lens. Hence, for the remainder of this paper, I will use T&D to refer to in-service PD in general. In a similar way, I will use OD when addressing the relationship of PD to the educational organization or school.

Methodology

The literature for this review was selected using the ERIC database. Key words such as professional development, EFL, in-service, and teacher were combined to reveal a total of 149 articles. EFL publications traditionally have a rigorous review process, and I believed this would ensure quality research regardless of methodology. Therefore, only peer-reviewed journal articles (110) were selected for review. A survey of the 110 abstracts netted nine articles that met the following characteristics: They were directly related to T&D for EFL teachers, described initial professional education as it relates to T&D, and written by practitioners working in the context they describe. Two of these articles were discarded because they did not discuss teachers in public schools. Major themes and issues of T&D for each context in the remaining seven articles were identified and then compared across contexts for consensus and discordance. Findings are synthesized in an HRD framework, and suggestions for improvements and future research are made.

Analysis

The seven articles reviewed represent six national contexts: China, Italy, Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, and Turkey; methodology was primarily of a qualitative nature. This review attempts to clarify the topic of T&D and/or OD for EFL teachers in public schools across contexts by grouping issues common to some or all, so that an overall picture of challenges and problems emerges and clearer directions for future research and improvements can be drawn. Five major themes emerged from analysis: T&D that augments initial professional education; T&D that focuses on linguistic skills; T&D that focuses on teaching skills; T&D that has elements of OD; Needs assessment in T&D.

T&D that augments inadequate initial professional education (IPE). The relationship between T&D and IPE appears consistent in several contexts. Hu (2005) provides a detailed critique of curricula at two higher education institutions representative of those providing IPE for EFL teachers in secondary schools in China. His critique reveals significant gaps related to pedagogical methodology. As such, T&D, which takes place in the workplace through organized formal in-service training, is “the most important way to strengthen professional education” (p. 679).

Watts (1994) describes the tendency of IPE programs for EFL teachers in Switzerland to focus on literature rather than second language acquisition and new developments in teaching methodologies. Thus, as with China, in-service T&D provided by Swiss public education authorities must address the inadequacies of IPE. Lopriore (1998), on the other hand, discusses how T&D addresses the complete absence of IPE for EFL teachers in Italy. The Ministry of Education developed a national, system-wide in-service training program, the Progetto Speciale Lingue Straniere (Special Project for Foreign Languages, or PSLS), to compensate for the lack of IPE.

T&D that focuses on linguistic skills. Mastery of English is one of the most important competencies for teachers of EFL who are not native speakers of English (Williams as cited in Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008). Furthermore, confidence in English is seen as an important factor in self-images of non-native EFL teachers and in participation in T&D where native speakers are instructors (Wall, 2008). A survey of 132 EFL teachers in Turkey revealed that 63% of them associate T&D with language mastery (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008). Changes in English language policies in Korea and Thailand have made T&D in English language a necessity in these countries (Wall, 2008; Im, 2001); linguistic competency is also a component of Swiss and Italian T&D (Lopriore, 1998; Watts, 1994).

T&D that focuses on teaching skills. The development of teaching skills is a key component of T&D in every context surveyed. All of the articles reviewed stressed the importance of continued training in newer, learner-centered teaching methodologies and continued development in evaluation and communicative and/or skills-based instruction. However, culture seems to play a role in implementation and development of these skills. Wall (2008) reports cultural conflicts in Thailand where teachers showed strong resistance to T&D that encouraged them to move away from teacher-centered approaches in efforts to meet new national guidelines. Hu (2005) discusses cultural barriers to using new, learner-centered methodologies in China, where classes are traditionally teacher-fronted. He also points out that “face” and a reluctance to provide honest critiques hinder the development process in collaborative teacher-teacher T&D activities, such as peer observations.

T&D that has elements of OD. Team-learning, action research, and mentoring/coaching, all elements of organizational learning and OD, are found in some of the literature reviewed. Hu (2005) reports extensively on teaching research groups in China (all teachers are organized into these groups.) The activities of these groups are designed to improve educational practice (Paine & Ma as cited in Hu, 2005) and are quite varied, for example, collective lesson/curriculum planning, research and inquiry, observations, etc. They are “carried out in the presence of each other and create opportunities for teachers, especially novice teachers, to learn from colleagues” (p. 680). This is consistent with current literature on team-learning and mentoring: Team-learning “plays a role in developing the knowledge and skills of individuals who compose the team” (Edmondson & Nembhard as cited in Edmondson, Dillon & Roloff, 2006); definitions of mentoring often incorporate communities of practice (Murphy, Mahoney, Chen, Mendoza-Diaz & Yang, 2005).

Atay (2008) reports on T&D for Turkish EFL teachers that used action research. Action research is seen as a way of “fostering meaningful professional development for teachers” (Wallace as cited in 2008, p. 139); some see a similar form of it as the foundation for OD (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

Needs assessment and T&D. Authors in nearly all contexts emphasized the importance of needs assessment prior to implementing T&D programs. Atay (2008) notes that content in Turkish in-service training sessions is “generally conceptually and practically far removed from the contexts of the teachers” (p. 139). Not surprisingly, Buyukyavuz and Inal (2008) report that only 8 % of the 132 Turkish EFL teachers they surveyed considered in-service training sessions sources of knowledge. Watts (1994) reports a similar trend in Switzerland, where in-service training courses are more often than not “based on ad hoc notions of what the FL [foreign language] teacher requires in the way of extra training and are oriented towards the interests of course organizers... rather than those of the teachers themselves” (p. 19). These findings are consistent with Lohman and Woolf (1998), who point out that T&D programs have historically lacked context specificity. Although no single T&D program can be expected to meet the needs of all participants, a dialog between stakeholders and providers is necessary to define clear aims for T&D programs and to create programs which meet those aims (Friedman & Phillips, 2004).

However, EFL teachers are not always aware of their needs regarding T&D. For example, teachers of EFL in Thailand seemed largely unaware of the fact that their language skills were well below those required to teach communicative English as mandated by new national guidelines (Wall, 2008). Furthermore, 48 % percent of Turkish EFL teachers stated their desire for professional development, but, with the exception of linguistic development, most were unsure about what it entails (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008).

Italians, on the other hand, were well aware of teacher needs when they conceptualized PLS (Lapriore, 1998). Assumptions in that program are that T&D is most effective if it is conducted by peers, done collaboratively in a familiar context, immediately applicable, and readjusted to meet changing needs. Although this required training leaders of in-service T&D, who were full-time in-service teachers themselves, it led to their professional development as well as expertise in training (1998). Hu (2005) addresses a final issue in needs assessment prior to T&D: the different needs EFL teachers have at different stages in their careers.

Synthesis

Generally speaking, all of the literature reviewed is in agreement on two issues: the necessity for linguistic T&D and pedagogical T&D. Though the reasons for this are sometimes different, for example, augmenting initial professional education versus the need to keep up with curricular changes/new developments in teaching, linguistic and pedagogical competencies appear to form the base of T&D for EFL teachers in public schools in all contexts.

In terms of the focus of T&D, there seem to be two views. First, that T&D is directed primarily at the individual, for example, Wall, 2008; Buyukyavuz and Inal, 2008. Second, that it is more of an organizational matter, for example, Atay, 2008; Hu, 2005; Lopriore, 1998. Elements of OD, therefore, appear to be present in some development programs for EFL teachers. However, the ever changing nature of national guidelines and curricula mentioned in the literature points to a need for OD in all development programs. It is important for teachers to understand and work within the context of educational policy (Wall, 2008; Im, 2001); this can only be accomplished by adopting an OD perspective.

Needs assessment prior to T&D appears to be a problem across contexts. An ADDIE process (analyze, design, develop,

implement, and evaluate) like those used in other HRD fields would be useful in ensuring that practical needs are met and that expertise is developed while performance is being improved. However, as described above, it appears teachers in certain contexts are unable to assess what their needs are. Lewin's (as cited in Swanson & Holton, 2009) field theory may shed some light on this. When considering change we must remember that individuals or groups may have skewed views of reality or may not be able to see certain aspects of reality, for example, Turkish teachers in Buyukyavuz and Inal, 2008, or Thai teachers in Wall (2008). Hence, there is a need for T&D professionals, who can effectively analyze individual and organizational needs before creating T&D programs. Ideally, these professionals would be both subject matter experts and T&D experts (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Italy's PLS provides a model for this.

A number of new directions for research can be inferred from the discussion above. However, there are also gaps in the literature that require future research and consideration. First, there is almost no cross-over in the literature. A careful check of the reference sections of each article reveals only one cross-reference. Not surprisingly, this was in one of the articles about Turkish EFL teachers. Judging from the importance of T&D in the current educational climate, cross-fertilization of ideas and solutions across contexts would be useful and desirable. As indicated in this review, challenges and problems appear to be consistent even when contexts are diverse. Research is needed to see if solutions to these problems can be used across contexts.

A second problem is the lack of a shared vocabulary to describe the phenomenon of T&D for EFL teachers in public schools. At present, PD, CPE, and SD are used interchangeably, making it difficult to search for similar research. Furthermore, individual and organizational issues remain blurred in the current terminology. Taking an HRD perspective may help remedy these situations by providing a common lexicon and framework in which to discuss and view the topic of T&D for EFL teachers.

Third, although critical reflection appears to be a key component of professional development and is linked to organizational learning, it receives little consideration in the literature reviewed. Furthermore, the role of informal learning is unexplored. This is consistent with Lohman and Woolf (1998), who report that the "integration of informal and formal learning in the professional process" (p. 278) has traditionally been overlooked in T&D programs for teachers. Given the important roles of informal learning in workplace learning (Ellinger, 2005) and critical reflection in the development of expertise (Schon, 1987; Schon, 1983), these areas require more active exploration in T&D for EFL teachers.

Finally, issues surrounding T&D for EFL teachers are complex and multifaceted. In order to understand their interconnectedness and promote more effective T&D and OD, a systems approach, one of the foundational theories of HRD, is absolutely necessary. Research in this area appears non-existent at this time.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion above, an HRD perspective is helpful in shedding light on the challenges and issues in professional development (PD) for EFL teachers in public schools and in making suggestions for future research and improvements in current PD. Interestingly, another aspect of HRD, which was unanticipated, came to light as a result of adopting this perspective: career development (CD). Teachers of EFL need to know what PD is and require training in it (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008). They also need opportunities to participate in PD activities that match the different stages of their careers (Hu, 2005). CD and adult development theories can inform this process in the same way T&D and OD theories and practices can inform the other aspects of PD for EFL teachers.

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題目：学校現場において英語教員を対象とする専門領域の研修の現状

副題：SDからHRDへの転換の必要性について

サマリー

本論文は査読を受けた複数の学術論文をレビューするものである。これらの学術論文を通じ、6カ国の学校現場の英語教員を対象とする専門領域における研修の現状を紹介する。同時に国の境を超え、現役英語教員の研修制度における問題や課題を整理し、ヒューマン・リソース・デヴェロップメント（HRD）の視点からこの問題や課題をどのように解釈し、解決や取組をすればいいかについて提案をする。さらに今後の学校現場の英語教員に対する研修についての研究の展開についての提案もする。

