Exploring Professional Development across National Contexts: Challenges faced by public school teachers of EFL in Japan and other nations

英語教員の能力開発に関する国際比較研究 外国語としての英語教育を行っている日本及び他国の公立学校教員が直面する課題

SCHALKOFF Robert J.
シャルコフ ロバート

Abstract

A perceived gap exists between scholars and practitioners (Moats & McLean, 2009). Scholar-practitioners can play a role in bridging this gap by connecting their practice to theory and vice versa (Short & Shindell, 2009). The purpose of this paper is to explore similarities and differences in my 10 years of experience as a teacher-trainer of Japanese public school teachers of EFL to those reported in the literature about professional development (PD) for public school teachers of EFL in other contexts. Research was carried out in two phases. In Phase One, I conducted a review and synthesis of peer-reviewed articles describing PD of EFL teachers in six national contexts excluding Japan (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008; Hu, 2005; Im, 2001). Although PD of teachers is often associated with continuing professional education, continuing professional education and human resource development (HRD) are drawing closer together (Daley & Jeris, 2004). Due to the discrepant terminology and the individual and organizational issues found in the literature I surveyed, I chose an HRD lens to identify major themes and issues in individual contexts and to compare them across contexts for consensus and discordance. Four constructs emerged: 1) linguistic and pedagogical training; 2) individual and organizational development; 3) needs assessment; and 4) inadequacies in teacher preparation programs addressed by training and development. In Phase Two, I used these constructs as a framework to analyze my "insider" knowledge (Chavez, 2008) of PD for EFL teachers in Japan. Findings suggest that public school teachers in Japan face similar challenges to those in other nations regarding PD. Implications for how organizers and practitioners of PD in Japan might benefit from knowledge of the ways other nations are attempting to meet these challenges are discussed.

Keywords: Scholar-practitioner, professional development, EFL, human resource development, insider knowledge

Exploring Professional Development across National Contexts

English has increasingly become the lingua franca of business, diplomacy, science, and academics. This has led to reforms in English as a foreign language (EFL) curricula around the world (Graddol as cited in Wall, 2008). Accordingly, professional development (PD) has taken on increased importance 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).

The purpose of this paper is to compare my experiences as a teacher-trainer of Japanese public school teachers of EFL with findings reported

in the literature. I believe this comparison will help me reflect on my work as a teacher-trainer and provide me with a richer body of knowledge from which to draw when working with Japanese teachers of EFL. I hope to share this knowledge with organizers and practitioners of PD in Japan so that they might benefit from it as well.

Conceptual Framework

Professional Development

According to Dirkx and Austin (2005), the goal of PD is to foster knowledge. Dirkx and Austin identify four primary contexts for PD: Human Resource Development; Continuing Professional Education; Faculty Development; and Staff Development. Generally speaking, human resource development (HRD) is associated with training and organizational development in the corporate world; continuing professional education is associated with licensing issues in professions such as medicine, law, etc. Faculty development takes place with educators in higher education; staff development is associated with hospital staff and school teachers. However, these contexts for PD are not necessarily fast or firm. For example, Podeshi (2000) classifies teachers as professionals. Thus, PD for public school teachers, such as EFL teachers, might be seen as continuing professional education. However, much of the literature on PD for teachers treats PD as staff development. On the other hand, if one of the goals for PD for teachers is better performance in the classroom and training is one of the methods used to improve performance, an HRD perspective might also be appropriate.

Continuing Professional Education. Continuing professional education can be defined as education for professional practitioners that follows their initial professional education and extends their learning throughout their professional lives (Queeny, 2000). Continuing professional education serves a number of purposes. It enables professionals to stay up to date with new knowledge and new practices in their field. It also helps them maintain and further their competence as well as progress from novice to experienced practitioners. Sleezer, Conti, and Nolan (2004) sum up continuing professional education as any activity that certifies and improves professional knowledge and practice. Cervero (2001) asserts that problem-centered curricula and critical reflection should be part of this process.

Staff Development. Staff development, on the other hand, has been defined as activities or processes designed to assist educators or school employees improve their skills, attitudes, knowledge and/or performance in their jobs (Dirkx & Austin, 2005; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Accordingly, staff development activities generally occur in the workplace, most often during so-called "in-service days." As with continuing professional education, critical reflection is a key element in staff development. Furthermore, critical reflection points to a larger goal than just individual development: Critical reflection or reflective practice is individuals working to improve organizations through improving themselves (Osterman and Kottkamp as cited in Dirkx & Austin, 2005).

Human Resource Development. McLean and McLean (2001) argue that HRD is strongly influenced by its context, which includes where HRD is studied and practiced, and is determined by national as well as organizational culture. As such, it may be difficult to define HRD. Swanson and Holton (2009) describe HRD as "a process of developing and unleashing expertise" in order to improve performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels (p. 4). McLean and McLean (2001) provide a broader definition of HRD. They describe HRD as any processes or activities that have the potential to "develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction" (p. 322).

Training and development (T&D) is the largest realm of HRD activity. Training is a process that systematically develops work-related knowledge and expertise with the object of improving performance in individuals (Swanson

& Holton, 2009). Development is a planned process that leads to the increase and expansion of knowledge and expertise of people beyond their present job requirements. Organizational development, another aspect of HRD, works on a system-wide level as opposed to an individual one (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Organizational development applies knowledge in the behavioral and social sciences to the "planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes" of an organization in order to increase its performance (p. 288). One of the greatest differences between continuing professional education or staff development and HRD is the latter's focus on the organization. Sleezer (2004) argues that HRD does not stop at the improvement of individual knowledge and practice, but also works to improve learning and performance across and within other levels of complex systems at the same time.

HRD as opposed to other perspectives. Though continuing professional education and staff development perspectives are certainly viable, an HRD perspective, with its dual focus on learning and performance, may help shed light on current issues as well as future directions for PD of EFL teachers in public schools. Furthermore, HRD literature is explicit about two elements that should be key goals for teachers of EFL: expertise and performance. Swanson and Holton (2009) argue that the development of expertise is of the upmost importance in HRD, and that the development of expertise leads to improved performance. Therefore, if the goals of PD for EFL teachers include learning, improved performance, and the development of expertise (Lohman & Woolf, 1998), it makes sense to look at PD from an HRD, and more specifically a T&D perspective.

Moreover, HRD literature, for example Swanson and Holton (2009), argues for a systemic perspective to training. Schools are social systems made up of multiple and interconnected parts (Lohman & Woolf, 1998). In addition to providing learning environments for children or adult learners, schools also provide learning opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching. In fact, PD for EFL teachers is usually provided by the schools at which they work (Watts, 1994). Furthermore, PD usually occurs in the workplace or "in-service." Thus, it holds to reason that the goals of PD include not only improving individual teacher performance but also improving the overall performance of the providers: schools. As such, it is important to look at the interconnectedness of school and teacher needs. A systemic or organizational perspective can help clarify such connections. This argument is solidified by the importance of critical reflection in staff development mentioned above: Critical reflection acts as a bridge connecting individual learning to organizational learning (Van Woerkom, 2004). Finally, as Rummler 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 from individual to organizational learning.

Crossan, Lane, and White's (1999) 4I model shows organizational learning moving cyclically through six stages. Organizational learning begins at the individual level and moves to the group level before finally leading to changes in practices and values at the organizational level. These changes are fed back through each level and result in a restructuring of group and individual perceptions and practices. Current thinking indicates that this recurring loop leads to the establishment of a learning culture within organizations. According to Rebelo and Gomes (as cited in Rebelo & Gomes, 2010), a learning culture can be described as a culture within an organization that is geared towards the promotion, sharing, and facilitation of its members' learning in order to contribute to organizational development and performance. The central idea underlying this type of culture is the promotion

of individual learning that can be turned into group learning or organizational learning, which ultimately leads to organizational success.

Based on the arguments presented above, it appears possible and helpful to view PD for EFL teachers through an HRD lens. T&D with its emphasis on the development of work-related knowledge and expertise in individuals provides a lens through which to view the predominant context of PD for EFL teachers: in-service workshops. In a similar way, organizational development can help us understand the relationship of PD to the providers of PD: schools. An organizational development perspective also helps us see how different types of organizational culture might promote or prohibit learning in PD in EFL teachers. This last point may help schools make a shift from learning at the individual level to learning at the organizational level. This shift would benefit all members of the organization and the organization itself.

Scholar-practitioners

Literature on PD for EFL teachers in public schools reveals that many of the trainers who lead or act as consultants for PD programs are scholars, specifically university professors. I am no exception. I teach EFL methodology to undergraduates, and act as a consultant/teacher trainer in PD programs for EFL teachers at all levels of the education system in Japan. This work is informed by and an inseparable part of my research on EFL teaching methodology and practices.

Moats and McLean (2009) point to a perceived gap between scholars and practitioners in HRD. My experience as a teacher-trainer in Japan has given me many opportunities to see a similar gap between scholars and practitioners of EFL in Japan. This gap is apparent when practitioners second guess scholars with such criticisms as, "it looks good on paper, but will it actually work in the classroom" or "that might be possible on the drawing board, but what happens when you get it into the classroom." Scholars are seen as having good ideas; however, these ideas are not always perceived to be practical or easily applied in the classroom. Scholars, on the other hand, tend to dismiss what "works" in the classroom, particularly when what "works" cannot be supported empirically by past or current theories or literature on foreign language acquisition. Interestingly, however, scholars, when they are speaking candidly with one another, sometimes admit that they "talk" a better game than they can "play." In other words, they are better at critiquing lessons than they are at actually teaching them.

Short and Shindell (2009) tell us that scholar-practitioners can play a role in bridging perceived gaps between academia and practice by connecting practice to theory and vice-versa. Short (as cited in Bank, Wang, Zheng, & McLean, 2007) describes scholar-practitioners as those people who are able to ground their practice in research and theory. Scholar-practitioners also champion research and theory in the workplace as well as in professional associations. Thus, people who are scholar-practitioners not only conduct research, they also disseminate the results of their own research and practice and form partnerships with other academics and practitioners to promote the development of their field.

Although Short and Shindell and Short are describing scholar-practitioners in the field of HRD, their descriptions resonate with my own experiences. I am a professor of EFL teaching methodologies. At the same time, however, I am also a practitioner of EFL. I have taught EFL at all levels of the education system in Japan for over 20 years. My research informs my practice, and, if I am honest with myself, my practice informs my research in a similar way. Furthermore, I try to disseminate findings from my research to practitioners and I often find myself partnered with both academics and practitioners in various PD programs and projects. Thus, as both a scholar and practitioner, I am in a unique position: I can act as a bridge between academia and teachers in

the classroom.

Insider Research

Workman (2007) argues that the terms "insider researcher", "practitioner researcher", and "worker researcher" are interchangeable (p. 147). Robson (as cited in Workman, 2007) describes a practitioner researcher as someone who works in a particular field while simultaneously engaging in research that is relevant to that field. There are some clear merits and demerits to practitioner or insider research. Chavez (2008) points to an "insider/outsider" debate in which the outsider perspective is considered objective and accurate, and the insider perspective is considered subjective and biased. However, she reveals the irony of this type of black and white stance: Insiders are often able to provide insight at a deeper level than outsiders because of their connection to the people, places, and events being studied. Insiders may also have easier access to the group being observed. Moreover, they may establish a rapport with the group that cannot be easily replicated by an outsider. Chavez (2008) argues that the outsider-insider dichotomy is false because both outsiders and insiders must deal with positionality issues, for example, the "researcher' s sense of self, and the situated knowledge she/he possesses as a result of her/his location in the social order" (p. 474). Finally, she points out that assumptions about insider positionality are "theoretical, supported by little empirical evidence, and neglect the current trends of thinking in social construction and polyvocality" (p. 475).

Chavez (2008) describes two types of insider researchers: total and partial insiders. Total insiders are researchers who share multiple identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, or class or profound experiences, for example, family membership, with the group being studied. Partial insiders are researchers who share a single or only few identities with the group being studied. At the same, partial insiders also maintain a certain amount of distance or detachment from the group. In terms of the research described in this paper, I fall into the latter type: partial insider. Although I am a practitioner of EFL, an identity I share with teachers who participate in PD programs, I am not a public school teacher. Nor am I Japanese. I am an American and a native speaker of English. Regardless, I spend a tremendous amount of time as a teacher-trainer with Japanese ELF teachers working in the public schools. I speak Japanese fluently, and my research focuses on the Japanese context. Therefore, I am in a unique position to share my "insider" knowledge about PD for teachers who teach EFL in public schools in Japan.

Methodology

Research was carried out in two phases. In Phase One, I conducted a review of literature describing PD of EFL teachers in six national contexts excluding Japan (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008; Hu, 2005; Im, 2001; etc.). I used an HRD perspective to identify major themes and issues in individual contexts and to compare them across contexts for consensus and discordance. In Phase Two, I used emergent constructs from the literature as a framework to analyze critical reflections of my "insider" knowledge (Chavez, 2008) of PD for EFL teachers in Japan.

Phase One

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, I conducted an integrative literature review of the topic using an HRD lens to provide a clearer understanding of issues surrounding it. I asked myself the following questions: Is there consensus about what constitutes PD for EFL teachers in public schools; what are the challenges and problems in PD for EFL teachers, and are they consistent across contexts; what issues emerge when I use an HRD lens to look at PD for EFL teachers in public schools. The answers to these questions helped identify similarities, contradictions, and gaps in the literature in addition to forming the basis for my

work in Phase Two.

The literature reviewed 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. 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 PD for EFL teachers; described initial professional education as it relates to PD; and were 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 PD for each context in the remaining seven articles were indentified and then compared across contexts for consensus and discordance. Findings were synthesized in an HRD framework. Specifically, as per my discussion of an HRD perspective above, in-service workshops, or sessions held during working hours, that focused on the improvement of the performance of individual teachers were classified as training and development (T&D), whereas activities related to the improvement or organizational, or school, performance were classified as organizational development. The emergent constructs provided the basis for my research in Phase Two.

Phase Two

The four constructs that emerged from Phase One provided a framework with which to critically reflect on my "insider" teacher-trainer experiences. My "insider" experiences fell into four categories: formal in-service PD with public school teachers of EFL at the elementary level; semi-formal in-service PD with public school teachers of EFL at the elementary, junior high, and senior high levels; formal in-service PD with public school teachers of EFL in district or prefecture-wide PD programs; and formal PD with public school teachers in certified re-licensure programs. PD experiences in the first category are generally sponsored by individual schools or boards of education. They consist of three parts: observation of a lesson taught by a Japanese EFL teacher; a short self-critique by the teacher of the lesson followed by the critical reflection of observers, including me; and a short workshop or discussion given or led by me centering around issues related to the lesson.

The second type of PD, semi-formal in-service PD with public school teachers of EFL at the elementary, junior high, and senior high levels, is typically part of my consultation work. In these cases, I work with teachers at schools that have been selected by the Japanese Ministry of Education or a prefecture or city board of education to conduct research in EFL methodology. As part of these activities, I work closely with professors from other universities who are co-consultants, and I often give demonstration lessons as part of this type of PD. Additionally, I may lead workshops on themes central to the research questions being explored at individual schools. Observations and critiques other teachers' lessons are sometimes a part of this work.

The third type of PD, formal in-service PD with public school teachers of EFL in district or prefecture-wide PD programs, takes place during work hours, but "off-campus" at convention centers. The workshops or semi-lectures I lead are usually given to a large group of educators who teach at different levels. These sessions can be attended by as many as 250 or 300 teachers. Furthermore, my workshops are usually a part of a larger, multi-day program built around a single theme. Other speakers are usually present and practitioner-led discussion groups are quite common in this format.

The final type of PD, formal PD with public school teachers at the elementary, junior high, and senior high level in certified re-licensure programs, takes place at the university where I work. These programs are certified by the Japanese Ministry of Education and are a part of the re-licensure process all public school teachers must participate in to renew their teaching licenses. The PD

sessions I conduct are six hours in length, level and topic specific, and have a formal evaluative component.

Data for critical reflections on my experiences in each of these types of PD came from various sources. In some cases I used reflective notes from my teaching journal; in others, evaluations by teachers involved in the PD sessions. Personal e-mail and telephone conversations with teachers at schools involved in research programs were another source of data, as were discussions that took place within the PD sessions themselves. The content of discussions within the PD sessions was available to me in notes recorded by teachers acting as scribes for individual sessions. Reports and/or transcriptions of PD sessions published by sponsors of the sessions, as well as reports written by me and published in various academic journals provided me with further data to analyze. In cases where written data was unavailable, I relied on my memory of PD teacher-training experiences and conferred with participants in these experiences to confirm or reconfirm my interpretation of those events. The four constructs that emerged from the literature review provided me with a structure with which to organize my experiences as well as compare them to those reported in the literature.

Phase One: Literature Review

Analysis

The seven articles reviewed represent six national contexts: China, Italy, Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, and Turkey. Methodology in the articles was primarily of a qualitative nature. I attempted to clarify PD for EFL teachers in public schools across contexts by grouping issues common to some or all. In this way, an overall picture of challenges and problems emerged and clearer directions for future research and improvements could be drawn. Four major constructs emerged from analysis: T&D that addresses inadequacies in teacher preparation programs; T&D that focuses on individual skills, specifically linguistic and pedagogical issues; activities related to organizational development; and needs assessment as a part of T&D.

T&D that augments inadequate initial professional education. The relationship between T&D and initial professional education, or teacher training programs at the undergraduate level, appears consistent in several contexts. Hu (2005) provides a detailed critique of curricula at two higher education institutions engaged in initial professional education for EFL teachers in secondary schools in China. His critique reveals significant gaps in pedagogical methodology. T&D, which takes place in the workplace through formal in-service training, is "the most important way to strengthen professional education" in China (p. 679).

Watts (1994) describes the tendency of initial professional education programs for EFL teachers in Switzerland to focus on literature rather than second language acquisition or new developments in teaching methodologies. Thus, as with China, in-service T&D provided by Swiss public education authorities must address the inadequacies of undergraduate teacher training programs. Lopriore (1998) discusses how T&D addresses the complete absence of initial professional education for EFL teachers in Italy. The Italian 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 this lack of initial professional education in foreign language education.

T&D that focuses on individual skills: 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). 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 skills a necessity in these countries, too (Wall, 2008; Im, 2001). Linguistic

competency is also a component of Swiss and Italian T&D (Lopriore, 1998; Watts, 1994). Furthermore, confidence in English is seen as an important factor in the self-images of non-native EFL teachers (Wall, 2008). This is especially true when non-native EFL teachers participate in T&D where instructors are native speakers of English.

T&D that focuses on individual skills: Pedagogical skills. The development of teaching skills is a key component of T&D in every context surveyed. All of the literature stressed the importance of 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 new teaching 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. His findings also show that "face" and a reluctance to provide honest critiques hinder the development process in collaborative teacher-teacher T&D activities.

T&D that has elements of organizational development. Elements of organizational learning and development are found in some of the literature reviewed. Hu (2005) reports extensively on teaching research groups in China. 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, and observations. They are "carried out in the presence of each other and create opportunities for teachers, especially novice teachers, to learn from colleagues" (p. 680). These activities are consistent with literature on team-learning and mentoring, both elements of organizational development. Team-learning develops the knowledge and skills of individuals who make up 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 Atay, 2008, p. 139); some see a similar form of action research as the foundation for organizational development (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

Needs assessment as a part of 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 speaking "conceptually and practically far removed from the contexts of the teachers" (p. 139). Not surprisingly, Buyukyavuz and Inal (2008) report that only 8 % of 132 Turkish EFL teachers considered in-service training PD 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" (p. 19) instead of the interest or needs of the teachers participating in PD. These findings are consistent with Lohman and Woolf (1998), who point out that PD programs have historically lacked context specificity.

EFL teachers, however, 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 mandated by new national guidelines (Wall, 2008). Furthermore, 48% of Turkish EFL teachers stated a desire for PD. However, with the exception of linguistic development, most were unsure about what PD entailed (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008).

Italians, on the other hand, were well aware of teacher needs when they conceptualized PSLS

(Lapriore, 1998). Some of the assumptions of this program are that T&D is most effective when it is conducted by peers, done collaboratively in a familiar context, immediately applicable, and readjusted to meet changing needs. Though this type of T&D required the training of leaders, in this case full-time teachers, it led to a more sophisticated type of PD for the leaders. One aspect of PD for leaders was the development of expertise in training (1998). Hu (2005) addresses a final issue in needs assessment prior to T&D: the needs EFL teachers have at different stages in their careers. He asserts that teachers who have different levels of experience require different types of T&D.

Phase Two: PD in Japan

T&D that addresses inadequacies in teacher preparation programs

In my experience, T&D that addresses inadequacies in teacher preparation programs at universities is a key issue in T&D for Japanese teachers. Like T&D for EFL teachers in Switzerland (Watts, 1994), a sizable proportion of Japanese teachers of EFL come to the field with literature backgrounds as opposed to backgrounds in teaching methodologies. Moreover, only four credit hours (approximately 60 classroom hours) of teaching methodology are necessary for a teaching license in EFL at the high school level. Junior high teachers must take double that number, eight credits, but surprisingly, and in a way similar to teachers in Italy (Lapriore, 1998), elementary school teachers in Japan are not required to take any preparatory classes in EFL methodology at the undergraduate level.

Adding to these challenges are gaps between institutional curricula similar to those reported by Hu (2005). For example, the curriculum for students working toward their EFL teaching license at my university is quite practical. It focuses on an experiential as opposed to a didactic approach to teaching and learning EFL. However, the curriculum one of my colleagues has developed for another university is quite theoretical in nature. It focuses more on second language and vocabulary acquisition than on practical applications of those theories. Generally speaking, this latter, theoretical type of curriculum is more common. Thus, the focus of many of the T&D sessions I conduct is on teaching methodology, in particular, methodologies of a communicative and practical nature.

T&D that Focuses on Individual Skills: Linguistic Skills

Nearly every PD session I conduct is dedicated in some part to the improvement of English language skills in EFL teachers. This is particularly true of elementary school teachers, where the EFL curriculum is relatively new. However, with the Japanese Ministry of Education's push for high school EFL classes conducted primarily in English, greater emphasis is being placed on improving the English skills of public high school teachers of EFL. Classroom English has become a hot topic at T&D sessions at the elementary and high school levels. In fact, Yamaguchi Prefecture, the prefecture in which I live and teach, has sponsored a number of programs in the recent past for junior and senior high school teachers that have focused on improving the linguistic skills of EFL teachers, including their ability to teach in English.

Similar to Wall (2008), I find that many Japanese teachers of EFL come to workshops with a certain amount of anxiety. This is primarily due to me being a native speaker of English. Furthermore, elementary school teachers have poor self-images regarding their proficiency in English, especially their listening and pronunciation skills. They are acutely aware of their perceived inadequacies, and part of the work that I do with elementary school teachers involves trying to help them develop a more positive image of themselves as speakers of English.

T&D that Focuses on Individual Skills: Pedagogical Skills

Similar to the literature reviewed, the development of teaching skills is a key component

of T&D in Japan. Regional as well as city boards of education request training in newer, learner-centered teaching methods. These organizations are also concerned with more holistic methods of evaluation and communicative and/or skills-based instruction. Moreover, all of the national or local government sponsored EFL research projects on which I have consulted have been concerned with developing or promoting more active and holistic teaching methodologies. These new methodologies are being developed to replace more traditional grammar and translation based methods. However, as with teachers in Thailand (Wall, 2008) and China (Hu, 2005), culture seems to play a role in whether these methods are implemented and whether teachers choose to pursue the development of these skills.

When I first began working as a teacher-trainer 10 years ago, some teachers showed strong resistance to T&D that encouraged them to move away from teacher-centered approaches. Even though these efforts were part of national mandates to meet new guidelines that were communicative as opposed to grammar translation based, some veteran teachers refused to implement the new methodologies they had learned in T&D sessions. Like China (Hu, 2005), classes in Japan are traditionally teacher-fronted, and some teachers found it difficult to give students a more active role in classes. The situation, however, has changed considerably in the past two or three years. More and more teachers are starting to embrace or at least entertain the idea of learner centered classes. Furthermore, in contrast with what Hu reports in China, honest critiques are becoming more common in collaborative teacher-teacher T&D activities in Japan. Administrators, in particular those in charge of curriculum development and/or vice principals or principals, are actively engaged in finding ways to help teachers learn to express and engage in objective criticism and critical reflection.

T&D that has Elements of Organizational Development

With the Japanese focus on group culture, one might think that organizational development plays a key role in T&D for EFL teachers. In reality, however, I have seen very few attempts to engage in organizational development that might support or further the development of individual teachers or improve organizational learning. Team-learning, action research, and mentoring/coaching, all elements of organizational learning and development, are quite rare in my experience. In fact, I ask teachers who attend my workshops to consider the organization in which they are working. I also encourage them to think about other organizations to which they are connected. This is particularly true when I am dealing with elementary school teachers and junior high school teachers. Both must have a clear idea of the way their curricula relate to one another.

I also address issues of organizational learning and development with administrators. However, the personnel system in public schools hinders attempts at developing the type of organizational learning culture described by Rebelo and Gomes (2010). Public school teachers in Japan are transferred within school districts at the elementary and junior high levels and within the prefecture at the high school level. There is no set time span for these transfers, but in my experience the average teacher will usually be transferred every six and eight years. Administrators, especially principals and vice principals, are often moved at a quicker rate, some as quickly as every two years. Changes of this nature make it nearly impossible to establish the type of administrative support necessary for organizational learning. Team learning is also hindered by these frequent transfers.

There are, however, some exceptions. Some schools manage to promote a learning culture and engage in team learning on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, these schools are the ones where I have seen the most improvement in teacher performance. Similar to Crossan, Lane, and White's

(1999) 4I model, learning and PD at these schools initially began at the individual level. Then, it became a group process. Eventually, group learning changed the way the schools approached teaching EFL. I have seen examples of the second half of Crossan et al.'s cycle when new teachers arrive at these schools. New teachers are immediately influenced by organizational values already in place, and they change their teaching practices accordingly.

Needs Assessment as a Part of T&D

Needs assessment prior to implementing T&D programs is almost non-existent in PD in Japan. It is very rare for me to receive any information about the EFL teachers I will be working with at any given PD workshop, let alone a summary of their needs. Interestingly, feedback from teachers who participate in PD sessions I conduct often indicate their surprise at the practical nature of the work we do. Their surprise may be consistent with the impressions Turkish EFL teachers (Buyukyavuz & Inal, 2008) have about in-service training sessions, and what Watts (1994) reports in Switzerland about in-service training courses being "based on ad hoc notions of what the FL [foreign language] teacher requires in the way of extra training" (p. 19). In other words, EFL teachers in Japan may be used to PD programs that lack context specificity (Lohman & Woolf,1998).

Another issue, one similar to what Hu (2005) discusses, is that Japanese EFL teachers may have different needs at different stages in their careers. Just recently, I conducted a PD session for teachers seeking re-certification. 10 year, 20 year, and 30 year veterans were all required to participate in the same session. Teachers from each group brought with them a different set of experiences and outlooks. These differences were evidenced in our discussions. Theories of adult development and the development of expertise appear to support what Hu describes: Adults at different stages of their lives and careers have different needs and characteristics. Thus, PD for EFL teachers in Japan, with its one size fits all approach, may be less effective than PD that is tailored to the type and extent of experiences teachers have.

Discussion

Generally speaking, the literature reviewed is in agreement on two issues: the necessity for linguistic T&D and the necessity for pedagogical T&D. Though the reasons why teachers need these types of PD are sometimes different, linguistic and pedagogical competencies appear to form the base of T&D for EFL teachers in public schools in all contexts. This is true of my experiences in Japan, too. Indeed, most of the invitations I receive to conduct PD sessions are concerned with one or both of these issues. The latter, pedagogical competency, however, is more prominent in Japan than it is in the literature. Organizers and providers of PD in Japan appear to be more focused on providing pedagogical T&D than they are on providing linguistic T&D.

In terms of the focus of T&D in the literature, there appear to be two views. First, that T&D is directed primarily at the individual, for example, Wall (2008) and Buyukyavuz and Inal (2008). Second, that T&D is more of an organizational matter, for example, Atay (2008), Hu (2005), and Lopriore (1998).The ever changing nature of national guidelines and curricula mentioned in the literature points to a need for organizational development in all PD 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 organizational development perspective.

Although there is not a significant amount of emphasis on organizational development in PD programs in Japan, I feel it is important. Thus, I make it a point to address organizational development in PD sessions I do. I believe adopting a systems view might improve PD programs. However, there are some aspects of organizational culture in Japanese public schools, in particular, the practice of transferring teachers

within school districts and prefectures, that may impede the establishment of a learning culture, one of the most important characteristics of a learning organization.

Needs assessment prior to T&D appears to be a problem that crosses contexts, including my own in Japan. An analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate process like that used in HRD 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 that 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. This appears to be true for Turkish teachers in Buyukyavuz and Inal (2008) and 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.

Although no single PD program can be expected to meet the needs of all participants, a dialog between stakeholders and providers is necessary to define clear aims for PD programs and to create programs which meet those aims (Friedman & Phillips, 2004). T&D professionals could play an important role in this process. Ideally, T&D professionals would be both subject matter experts and T&D experts (Swanson & Holton, 2009). In other words, they would be scholar-practitioners. Italy's PSLS provides a model for this type of crossover from teacher to teacher-trainer/scholar-practitioner. In my experience, however, Japanese teachers of EFL may be reluctant to take on a leadership or scholarly role in T&D. There are, of course, some exceptions. For example, four practitioners I know have become teacher-trainers. Unfortunately, examples like this are few and far between.

A number of new directions for research can be inferred from the discussion above. New directions might include the following: research that focuses on the prevalence of organizational learning in schools with EFL programs; the connection between context and content in PD programs for EFL teachers; and how EFL teachers at different stages of their careers may have different needs when it comes to PD. 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 surveyed 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 paper, challenges and problems appear to be consistent even when contexts are diverse. Research is needed to see if solutions to PD problems can be used across contexts.

Another gap in the literature is the dearth of material on PD for EFL teachers in public schools in Japan. My initial search on ERIC for literature on PD for EFL teachers in public schools revealed no articles in English on this topic in a Japanese context. There is, however, a good deal of literature available in Japanese. Unfortunately, language makes access a challenge. It is up to bilingual educators like me to make this literature available to a wider audience.

A third problem is the lack of a shared vocabulary to describe the phenomenon of PD for EFL teachers in public schools. At present, continuing professional education and staff development 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, as I have done in this paper, may help remedy these situations. HRD provides a common lexicon and framework in which to discuss and view the topic of PD for EFL teachers. There may, however, be some resistance

to using HRD, because it is a body of literature not normally associated with PD for public school teachers.

Fourth, although critical reflection appears to be a key component of PD 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 PD 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 PD for EFL teachers in all contexts, including Japan.

Finally, issues surrounding PD for EFL teachers are complex and multifaceted. In order to understand their interconnectedness and promote more effective T&D and organizational development, a systems approach, one of the foundational theories of HRD, is absolutely necessary. Research in this area, however, 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 PD for EFL teachers in public schools. An HRD perspective is also useful for making suggestions for future research and improvements in current PD in nearly all contexts. Interestingly, another aspect of HRD, which was unanticipated, came to light as a result of adopting this perspective: career development. Teachers of EFL need to know what PD is and they 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). Career development and adult development theories can inform this process in the same way T&D and organizational development theories and practices can inform the other aspects of PD for EFL teachers.

Some limitations of the research presented in this paper are the sole reliance on my experiences as a teacher-trainer in Japan. Furthermore, as this is the first attempt to use HRD as a lens through which to analyze and evaluate PD programs, the effectiveness and suitability of this approach needs to be explored more thoroughly. Finally, the literature surveyed in Phase One is limited in scope and size. More literature on PD for EFL teachers, perhaps in languages other than English, needs to be made available for review.

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英語教員の能力開発に関する国際比較研究 外国語としての英語教育を行っている日本及び他国の 公立学校教員が直面する課題

シャルコフ ロバート

研究者と実践家との間にギャップがあるように感じられる。そこで、研究者でありなおかつ実践家である者は自らの実践を理論に結び付けるによってこのギャップを埋めることが可能となる。本研究のねらいは世界各地での外国語としての英語教員に対する能力開発や研修制度を日本の同様のものと比較し、共通点及び相違点を明らかにすることである。本研究は２部に分かれ、第１部では文献レビューを通じて６か国の事情を紹介し、分析した。第２部では第１部の分析を踏まえ、研究や実践を展開している著者自らの経験をカテゴリー別に分け、更なる分析を行った。その結果、日本は海外の取組や失敗・成功から学ぶことが多く、逆に日本の取組を世界に発信することによって、世界各地域の英語教育への貢献ができる可能性があることがわかった。