

論文

Recently Graduated English Teachers' Views on Teacher Training

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Abstract

This paper is a follow-up study of the English teachers who graduated from the author's workplace (R University hereafter). 111 alumni English teachers (both undergraduate and graduate level) who graduated in March 2007 or after were identified and asked in a questionnaire about their thoughts on the teacher training they received at R University as well as what types of support they currently wish the university would provide. 33 responses were appropriate for analysis. Eight extremely able 'model teachers' were also requested for their views about the recent novice English teachers they meet in their workplaces in terms of their readiness for the job. Generally speaking, novice teachers think that they have learned a substantial amount from the pre-service teacher training, with the model teachers partially endorsing this belief. However, the novice teachers were found, in some cases, to lack adaptability, struggle with their duties other than the subject teaching, be simply too busy, and be troubled by the dated teaching methods at their workplaces. They were also found to be wishing for opportunities to reconnect with their former professors and alumni teachers. The paper concludes with a call for the necessity of providing in-service training for at least a few years after graduation so that novice teachers can fully function at their schools.

Keywords

Teacher training, novice teacher, in-service teacher training, pre-service teacher training, Reality shock

1. Introduction

This report is a case study of the university that the present author works for, which is to be called "R University" in this paper. R University is a large-scale private university located in West Japan. It has no college of education but has placed a strong emphasis on teacher training. Every year approximately 100 students obtain English teaching qualifications through the university and roughly

around 20 to 30 among them take up English teaching positions at secondary schools as their profession.

The author has been working at R University since 2005. Having been engaged in pre-service teacher training for almost 10 years at R University, she has had opportunities to visit former students and observe their teaching in various schools including the five R University affiliated schools. When observing these classes taught by recent graduates and talking with them afterwards, it became clear that conducting a follow-up study was necessary in order to reflect upon the effect and limitations of the pre-service training the university provided, both objectively measuring alumni's teaching abilities and subjectively exploring the values of the training, i.e., as seen from the graduates' own perspective. A follow-up study is also needed to identify what type of further care should be provided to the alumni teachers.

It is widely acknowledged that novice teachers need a long time to grow to be able to function as fully capable teachers. Some universities hold regular sessions with experts' talks, presentations of teaching practice by teachers, and workshops, but it is still rare to conduct in-depth analysis of the teaching abilities of alumni teachers who graduated from a specific institution in Japan, analyze the effectiveness of its pre-service training, and identify the necessary training contents of continuing education for its alumni teachers. This paper intends to put the first step forward to fill this gap by investigating R University alumni teachers' views on the teacher training they received while they were in university.

2. Curriculum of Teacher Training at R University

In order to obtain English teaching qualifications at R University, students are required to earn 67 credits from among specified courses. This includes a minimum of 20 credits related to the subject, namely, English literature, English language analysis, English communication and cross-cultural understanding. Students need to fulfill the rest of the credit requirements through classes in teaching philosophy, pedagogical principles, educational psychology, educational sociology, education policy, curriculum development, pedagogy in English teaching, moral education, counseling, teaching methodology, student guidance, class and school activities, and practicum.

Teaching skills of English as a subject are developed through two obligatory courses and three elective courses. The two obligatory courses consist of the introduction to English language teaching and a workshop type of training in which students plan a mock lesson, actually conduct a lesson while assuming that their classmates are their future secondary school students, and analyze the activity afterwards in class. The three elective courses consist of (1) one lecture course which introduces more detailed teaching skills and ideas and (2) two practicum types of courses, one focusing on junior high school and the other on senior high school.

3. Previous Studies

3.1 Novice teachers' "reality shock"

Novice teachers' state of affairs at their workplaces as well as their pre- and in-service training have attracted many researchers' attention. Some of such studies claim that novice teachers tend to encounter initial shock when they go into the actual teaching site, i.e., "reality shock" (Farrell, 2008). Xu (2012), Kumazawa (2013), and Farrell (2003, 2012) among others say that novice teachers tend to find a gap between their expectations and reality, and this gap is sometimes extremely challenging to them. Xu (2012) investigated four novice English teachers in China, and Kumazawa (2013) researched four English teachers in Japan. Both studies describe how these teachers needed to reshape their imagined selves/identities they had formed prior to teaching. Thus, Farrell (2012, p.446) calls for recognition of the need for "novice-service language teacher development" specifically for those teachers with limited experiences.

Shin (2012), Urmston and Pennington (2008), and Farrell (2008) claim that it is not just novice teachers who need to change. They point out that the macro system (e.g., societal pressure for tests, curriculum, senior teachers' traditional teaching methods) also needs to be changed. Otherwise novice teachers will never be able to use the more current pedagogy they have learned in their pre-service training.

Shin (2012), for example, investigated 16 novice English teachers in Korea who are proficient in English. Although there were various factors influencing novice teachers such as those related to students (their lack of understanding of English and low motivation), some institutional factors also limited their use of English in class such as pressure to use traditional methods of teaching and instruction aiming for tests. Similar limitations are observed in Hong Kong (Urmston & Pennington, 2008) as well as in Singapore (Farrell, 2008).

3.2 Novice teachers' knowledge of the subject and pedagogy

The studies cited in the previous section imply the significance of adaptability of the teachers who apply the sufficient knowledge they have to actual teaching conditions. Some studies, however, stress the importance of the knowledge base itself for teachers' confidence and successful teaching (Zakeri & Alavi, 2011; Chappell & Moore, 2012; Richards, Li, & Tang, 1995). Zakeri and Alavi (2011), for instance, investigated 55 novice English teachers in Tehran. They gave the "Teaching Knowledge Test" to those teachers and asked their knowledge on language, language teaching planning, and teaching management. They also gave the teachers the "Teacher Self-efficacy Scale", which consisted of 12 questions to assess their abilities of student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. Zakeri and Alavi (2011) found that the two scales significantly correlated, which led them to conclude that improving the future teachers' knowledge base is very important.

Richards, Li, and Tang (1995) explored the significance of experience and subject matter knowledge in terms of teachers' pedagogical decision making. They compared experienced teachers

and novice teachers when both groups were given the same material to use for their class lesson. Those two groups of teachers varied greatly because of the difference in their teaching experiences and their subject matter knowledge.

3.3 The effectiveness of pre-service and in-service training

Even though novice teachers' reality shock seems to be unavoidable, this does not mean that pre-service and in-service training is totally powerless (Faez & Valeo, 2013; Kiely & Askham, 2012; Mann & Tang, 2012). Faez and Valeo (2013) investigated 115 accredited ESOL teachers in Canada, who reported that the practicum training they had as part of their pre-service training was very useful. Kiely and Askham (2012) studied the impact of a short (4-5 weeks) TESOL program on teacher trainees. They found that these trainees benefited from the program, both in gaining confidence and a clear understanding of what it is like to be a TESOL teacher. Mann and Tann (2012) investigated four new teachers' initial year in Hong Kong and how their induction period with the support of mentors helped their professional development.

3.4 Summary of the literature review

Teachers' professional development entails both the initial accumulation of the basic, up-to-date knowledge and skills on English teaching pedagogy and more long-term, often autonomously guided development (Richards, 2005). However, the review has focused primarily on the former given the focus of the training target, i.e., the novice teachers. Many studies point out the initial "reality shock" that new teachers tend to face. Furthermore, to alleviate this "reality shock", the knowledge of the subject content, pedagogy, and practicum experiences are reported to be beneficial. The literature also reminds us of the importance of the social context in which the teaching takes place (Urmston & Pennington, 2008). In other words, whether or not novice teachers see their class as ideal is influenced not only by their individual knowledge/skills but also by the social environment in which the novice teachers are embedded. Therefore, with these possible conditions and predicaments that recently graduated alumni teachers may face in mind, the present study addresses the research questions stated in the next section.

4. Research Questions

This is a part of a larger study which investigated other issues involving the same participants. However, due to the limitation of the space, the present paper focuses on the following questions:

- (1) How do they evaluate their pre-service teacher training?
- (2) What further training/service do they wish to have?

5. Method

5.1 Participants

Two groups of teachers participated in this study, one being alumni teachers. 111 recent graduates (individuals who graduated in March 2007 or after) were identified teaching in secondary schools at the time of the data collection. A questionnaire, which was also used for other issues reported elsewhere (Yukawa, 2013) was sent to their e-mail address, home or work place address during September 2012 to February 2013. Thirty-three responses were appropriate for analysis and were used in this study.

In addition, cooperation from eight experienced teachers was also requested. These are highly skilled teachers chosen by the present author. The judgment was based on their teaching skills known through lesson observation, English knowledge, and understanding of English education observable through their talks and writings in various conferences and reports. The profiles of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table1

Profiles of the participants (n) = number of teachers)

	Novice Teacher's Profile ($n = 33$)	Model Teacher's Profile ($n = 8$)
Type of school	junior high school (12) senior high school (7) both (13) 6-year secondary (1)	junior high school (2) senior high school (4) both (2)
Type of school (foundation)	public (18) national (1) private (14)	public schools (2) private schools (6) (3 previously worked for public schools for an extended length of time)
Teaching experience	0-1 year (9), 1-2 years (10) 2-3 years (2), 3-4 years (3) 4-5 years (3), 5-6 years (4) 6-7 years (1) more than 7 years (1)	Average: 20.7 years
Experience of staying overseas	none (4) less than 1 month (6) 1-2 months (6) 2 months-0.5 year (1) 0.5-1 year (12) 1-2 years (1) 2 years or more (4)	1-2 years (2) 0.5-1 year (1)
English proficiency	Difficulty to teach in class (4) Can use English in class but difficulty in various occasions (11) Competent in most occasions (15) No problem in using English (3)	Competent in most occasions (5) No problem in using English (3)

As seen in Table1, both novice teachers and model teachers are not limited to any one level of school; some teach at junior high schools, others teach at senior high schools and still others work in an environment where they teach both levels. Furthermore, both groups' work places are not limited

to private or public school settings. The average number of teaching experience of the model teachers is 20.7 years, while the years of the novice teachers' teaching experiences are described in detail in the table above. As it shows, novice teachers with less than two years of experience outnumber the other experience groups (19 out of 33). Regarding the experience of staying overseas in English speaking countries, model teachers have very limited experience due to the general trends of the generation they belong to. Novice teachers on the other hand, generally have more experience of staying overseas. Novice teachers' English proficiency is overall good except for the four who state that they still have difficulty in using English in class.

5.2 Data

The data consist of the answers to one open-ended question (concerning RQ 1 and 2) and one closed-question (concerning RQ 2): Question for RQ1 and 2 asked, "What do you think of the teacher training you received at R University? Write your thoughts, possibly including: ① developing theoretical understanding and practical teaching skills of English, ② developing those of school education in general, and ③ the things you want to say to the university (including your hope)".

Question for RQ 2 asked, "What do you want your university to provide in order to support you? Choose any from (multiple responses possible): (1) program to help improve your English abilities; (2) program to help improve your pedagogical skills; (3) system to share English lesson plans and teaching materials; (4) network and meeting places which stimulate/motivate you for further learning".

5.3 Analysis

In order to analyze long texts written as the response to the open-ended question, the following procedure was taken. The present author read the free writings, divided them into independent statement units (even one sentence sometimes included more than one statement and in that case, the sentence was divided into multiple units), then made one card for each unit, categorized and labeled them. Following this, one teacher and two teacher trainees were called in to secure reliability of the analysis and they observed the categories and items for possible changes of categorization. The categories were then finalized and observed within and between the novice and model teachers.

As for RQ 2, novice teachers' responses to the closed question were observed and the comments made on their wishes for the university in the free writing were extracted and were categorized according to their contents.

6. Results

6.1 Novice Teachers' Reflection on the teacher training they received

There were 126 statement units (called 'comments' hereafter) in total stated by the 33 novice teachers as seen in Table 2.

The most frequent comments from this group of participants were on their English language

teacher training. They made as many as 71 comments, and out of those, 47 comments expressed appreciation of what they learned in university as part of their training. However, eight comments revealed the novice teachers' wishes to have had more training in one area or another. Five comments were neutral comments, saying that certain things were necessary in order to teach the subject very well. 11 Comments were comments written from other angles but related to the subject of language teaching. Likewise, 49 comments were made on training of teaching students in general. 20 were on the appreciation of what they had learned and 14 were things that they wished they had learned more of, and 11 neutral comment and 4 related comments. There were 6 comments that did not belong to either category 1 or category 2.

Table 2

Novice teachers' reflection on the teacher training they received (33 teachers, 126 comments in total, () = number of comments)

Category	Things learned in university (72)	Necessary knowledge and skills (17)	Things I wish I had done more in university (22)	Other comments (15)
Training on subject teaching (71)	Theories of English education (9) Overall knowledge of English education (9) Practical English teaching skills (18) Both theory and practical skills (11)	Practical teaching skills (5)	More concrete skills and ideas (3) More mock lessons (3) More observation of real classrooms (2)	Difficulty teaching low proficiency students (3) Difficulty conducting ideal class with dated teaching methods at workplace (8)
Category total	47	5	8	11
Training on teaching in general (49)	Theories and practical skills outside of subject area (6) Deep understanding of what it means to be a teacher (3) All teaching provided at university useful (7) Internships and volunteering (4)	Theories and practical skills out of subject area (4) A strong foundation in English language skills (5) Comprehensive learning outside of teaching (2)	More training about guiding students outside of the subject matter (14)	Inability to spare enough time for subject teaching/preparation due to too many miscellaneous duties (4)
Category total	20	11	14	4
Other (6)	Blessed with good friends and teachers (5)	Higher skills in using Excel (1)	-	-
Category total	5	1	-	-

When the comments on the training of subject matter teaching are examined in more detail, 47 comments were on the things they believe they learned: i.e., learning of theories of English education, overall knowledge of English education, practical English teaching stills, and both theory and practical teaching skills. However, some comments also express that the participating novice teachers wished they had done more mock lessons at the university in addition to learning more through lectures and classroom observation. There were two notable comments that were categorized in the 'other'. One was the fact some struggled in teaching low proficiency students. That is a sign of their lack of ability to adapt what they had learned in the teacher training program/university to the situations that they face in the classroom. As many as eight comments uniformly expressed, "the difficulty in conducting

ideal classes with dated teaching methods at their work place". This fact was mentioned in literature (Shin, 2012; Urmston & Pennington, 2008; and Farrell, 2008), which seems to be prevalent around the world.

Even though the comments expressing that they had learned a lot at the university outnumbered the comments wishing that more had been learned in relation to the subject of English language teaching, when it comes to the training on teaching in the areas other than the subject teaching, they regret not having learned more prior to teaching. Even though they appreciate that they had learned many things, they wish they had had more training about how to guide students (how to deal with disciplinary problems, special needs children and classroom management, etc.). In addition, they also mentioned the inability of being able to spare enough time for subject teaching preparation due to too many duties at school. This again is also frequently mentioned in literature (Xu, 2012; Kumazawa, 2013; and Farrell, 2008).

There was one comment made on the skill of Excel (software) being necessary in the workplace. In addition, some participants mentioned that they feel very fortunate to have met good friends and teachers at university.

6.2 Model Teachers' Views on novice teachers they met

There were 45 statement units in total expressed by the eight model teachers as seen in Table 3. One word of caution is needed here. Since the workplaces of only a few novice teachers overlap with merely three model teachers (who work in different schools), these comments by model teachers are not necessarily made regarding the novice teacher participants in this study but mostly on the novice teachers they met in recent years at their own workplaces.

Just like the novice teachers, the 45 comments were mostly on subject teaching. They made a few comments on the education of other areas (5 comments). When the comments on subject language teaching are examined, they show that the model teachers feel very positively about novice teachers' knowledge and skills (14), and yet about the same number of comments were made in a negative way on the same topics. This contradiction is well summarized by the three comments made in the "Other comments" on the right most column in Table 3 regarding the diversity of knowledge and skills of English teachers depending on the university they graduated from and on the individual.

As for the training on teaching in general, all the seven comments stressed the importance of relating to students as a crucial skill. Furthermore, in the "Other necessary things", five comments were made on the teachers' principles and philosophies, though the actual meaning of these comments is not very clear because the statements were brief and can be interpreted in various ways.

Table 3

Model Teachers' Views on novice teachers they have met (8 teachers, 45 comments in total, () = number of comments)

Category	Things learned in university(12)	Necessary knowledge and skills (17)	Things lacking (12)	Other comments (3)
1. Training on subject teaching (33)	Proficient English skills and knowledge (1) Solid foundation of theories of English language education (5) Practical skills of English language education (7)	English skills and knowledge (2) Solid foundation of theories of English language education (1) Practical skills of English language education (4) Understanding what it means to be a teacher (4)	English ability and knowledge (1) Practical skills in English language education (9) Understanding what it means to be a teacher (1)	The diversity of knowledge and skills in teaching English depending on the university graduated from and the individual (3)
Category total	12	7	11	3
2. Training on teaching in general (7)	-	The importance of relating to students(5)	Inability to create positive relationships with classes and coworkers (2)	-
Category total	-	5	2	-
3. Other necessary things (5)	-	A high ability to do paperwork (1) Teachers who have strong principles and accepting capacity are desirable (5)	-	-
Category total	-	5	-	-

6.3 Summary of the findings on RQ 3 and discussion

The findings from the analysis above can be summarized into the following:

- (1) Novice teachers think that they had learned a lot especially about subject teaching in their pre-service training. Model teachers also acknowledge this to some extent although there is some variability and their observations include novice teachers other than the ones investigated in this study;
- (2) Novice teachers suffer from the 'reality shock', as was expected from the previous studies, which comes from: (a) too much work outside of subject teaching, (b) inability to teach in the way they learned because of dated methods at school, and (c) their lack of flexibility in adapting their knowledge/skills according to the diversity of students;
- (3) Novice teachers wished they had learned more on how to educate children in the areas other than subject teaching, especially how to guide students.

When these results are juxtaposed with the finding from the same cohort on their self-efficacy scores (reported in detail in Yukawa, 2013), the importance of in-service training is more clearly understood. Yukawa (2013) reported that these teachers showed only around 3.0 in the 1-5 likert scale self-efficacy survey, whereas the model teachers showed almost full score (close to 5.0) on every item. The survey consisted of 16 can-do descriptors, for example, "I can help learners to write cohesive paragraphs and essays", which were based on J-POSTL, a reflective tool for student teachers developed by JACET-SIG on English Education (JACET SIG on English Education, 2010). This low self-

assessment was rather surprising because many of them did very well in their courses at university, (and the present author witnessed them) learning and preparing to become good English teachers at every opportunity they had prior to graduation.

As was summarized before, novice teachers say that they had learned a lot prior to teaching, which is partially acknowledged by model teachers, but their sense of self-efficacy is extremely low. The present author interprets this result as the evidence that sufficient teaching skills may not be attainable with pre-service training alone, especially at the level that dedicated novice teachers envisage to be able to attain.

R University being a university without a teacher training college in it, the results of the present sample cannot be generalizable to all novice English teachers in Japan. Especially the ones who are trained in national teachers colleges, in which the future teachers are sent to affiliated schools and public schools throughout their four years in college, might be better prepared and would suffer from only a minor shock in their first few years of teaching. Although whether there is such a gap or not is an empirical question, the author doubts that the situation is much different based on her, albeit informal and sporadic, observations of some novice teachers who were trained in other institutions of various types.

6.4 Result of RQ 2

The question for RQ 2 addressed: "What do you want your university to provide in order to support you?" The novice teachers wished the following support at the following ratios:

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|---|------------|
| ① Events that contribute to the improvement of English skills (courses or lectures, etc) | 14 (42.4%) |
| ② Events that relate to English classroom teaching skills in (workshops or lectures) | 28 (84.8%) |
| ③ A system where practicum or classroom materials can be shared (online site or classroom material bank, etc) | 26 (78.8%) |
| ④ A network or meeting place where general improvement as an educator is the incentive (lectures about education, alumni meetings, etc) | 22 (66.7%) |

Furthermore, 16 comments were written in the free-writing space. They consisted of six comments which request face-to-face learning opportunities, three comments which ask for an online archive of teaching materials, current information on useful books and an online conversation site to consult with others on their problems. Finally seven comments which hope for any form of support, especially the support that leads to getting connected to other teachers.

7. Conclusion

This paper concludes with the following implications. As for training on English teaching, university teacher trainers need to be aware that pre-service training is not the end of training with novice teachers, no matter how well-prepared the trainees may look; i.e., in-service training is necessary. Further systematic needs-based training should be organized and provided. Constructing a networking system is also desirable to support novice teachers for both technical needs and mental support. Even though nothing can be said until empirical data are collected, it is the present author's surmise that most inexperienced teachers should have the needs stated above regardless of the school they were trained in.

Regarding training on teaching in other areas, more practicum oriented learning is desired by novice teachers. R University's curriculum reform on teacher training started in 2011 and strives to accommodate such needs. Another follow-up study with the graduates who learned the new curriculum will be necessary in a few years.

The in-service training advocated here is to be done as a voluntary service by individuals or groups of teacher training universities. In the current teacher training system in Japan, the first year in-service training is organized by municipal boards of education in relation to all educational activities, but the training suggested here is continuing education focusing specifically on subject knowledge and its teaching. When the knowledge of what a university, for example, R University, provided as pre-service training and findings of novice teachers' needs analysis are combined, that should lead to well-tuned training particularly suitable for its alumni novice teachers, although such training can very well be open to all the novice teachers who are interested in joining.

This study, being a small scale case study conducted by the very teacher of the participating novice teachers, is not at all free from the biases and limitations vulnerable to these characteristics. In addition, the participants were skewed to the most recent (less than two years) graduates, and since the return rate was only one-third, the ones who feel close to the university may tend to have responded. With all these limitations in mind, further research of a wider scope needs to be conducted to improve the pre-service training and to better identify the novice teachers' needs for continuing training.

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最近卒業した英語教員の教師教育についての省察

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要 約

本稿は、著者の勤務校(以後R大学と呼ぶ)を最近卒業した英語教員の追跡調査である。2007年春にR大学もしくは大学院を卒業し、教鞭をとっていることが判明した111名の英語教員に対し質問紙調査を行い、R大学で受けた教師教育についての思いと今後の大学からの支援希望の内容について問うたところ、33名から有効回答が得られた。さらに、8名の非常に力量の高い「モデル」教員に、最近の職場の「若手」教員のレディネスについてどう思うかもたずねた。概して若手教員は大学での教師教育から多くを学んだと考えており、モデル教員も部分的にそれを認めている。他方、多様な生徒への適応性、教科外の指導と多忙さ、就職先での古い教授法に合わせねばならないことに苦慮するケースが見られた。若手教員は母校教授や同窓生教員と繋がる機会を切望していることも分かった。現場で十分に機能する教師を育てるためには、少なくとも数年の新卒用現職教員研修が必要である。

キーワード

教師教育、新米教員、現職教員研修、就業前教師教育、リアリティー・ショック

