

PRACTICUM HOST TEACHERS IN TESL EDUCATION IN CANADA: EFFECTS OF THE HOSTING EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

The *practicum* is a key component of teacher education in teaching English as a second language (TESL). Practicum students spend time in an ESL classroom as the guest of a teacher, variously referred to as a *cooperating*, *mentor*, or *host* teacher. TESL students, generally called *interns* when engaging in practicum, are usually required to complete a number of hours of observation and guided or observed practice teaching. In Canadian TESL programs, practicums are fundamental, and mandated by accreditation bodies such as TESL Ontario and TESL Canada. Research has shown these experiences to be important sources of teacher development by encouraging student teachers to reflect on practice and develop teaching skills (eg. Farrell 2008; Barahona 2016; Mann and Walsh 2017), but the effects of hosting on the perspectives and practice of host teachers have barely been examined. Do host teachers benefit from the practicum experience as student teachers do?

The present study is an exploratory case study of a group of nine Canadian TESL host teachers with varying degrees of experience as teachers and as hosts. It examines their perceptions of the hosting experience and the possible effects of hosting on their own teaching practice. Semi structured interviews were conducted around two research questions: 1) How do TESL practicum host teachers perceive the hosting process? 2) Do TESL practicum host teachers use the hosting process to reflect on their own practice, and if so, how? Results indicate that host teachers do feel that the experience leads them to think more about their motivations and practice, they feel the need to show their best, and it encourages them to be self aware and critical as they verbalize their planning processes. The host teachers generally tended to focus more on practical day to day classroom practice, and the less experienced tended to focus also on reflecting, experimenting, and student needs.

Literature Review

The TESL Practicum

Most TESL education programs geared toward teaching adults require a student to spend time in the classroom of an experienced ESL teacher. The student is generally referred to as an *intern*, the teacher is variously referred to as a *cooperating teacher* (eg. Payant & Murphy 2012), a *mentor teacher* (eg. McKay 2000), or, as in the case of the present study, a *host teacher*. The TESL practicum has been the focus of relatively few studies, despite the fact that practicum experiences are an integral part of TESL education programming in general, and are increasingly mandated and regulated by professional TESL organizations. In Ontario, Canada, TESL Ontario is mandated to provide accreditation of adult ESL teachers for work in government-funded ESL programs, and has strict practicum requirements of 50 hours of classroom experience for interns, with at least 20 hours of observed practice teaching (TESL Ontario, Adult ESL Teacher Accreditation, 2018).

Empirical work in this area has focused on beliefs about and perceptions of practicum by interns or host teachers (Crookes 2003; Diaz-Greenberg & Nevin 2004, Velez-Rendon 2006), and descriptions of practicum models (Flowerdew 1999; Stoyhoff 1999). A seminal work on the TESL practicum is that of Crookes (2003), a book-length description and analysis of the university MA TESOL practicum, which also functions as a handbook for teacher educators, providing guidance on such matters as classroom management, developing teaching philosophies, and lesson planning. Another broadly conceived work is that of Richards and Farrell (2011), which delves into the nature of the roles of interns in the practicum, and their interactions with host teachers, including collaboration. Crookes (2003) pays scant attention to the host teacher in the practicum dynamic, dealing with his/her role indirectly. Richards and Farrell (2011) treat the host teacher as a partner in the practicum, but their work is more as a guide to implementing the practicum than a piece of actual scholarly research.

Most studies which focus on the practicum are concerned with the experiences of the student interns (eg. Brinton & Holten 1989; Hall Haley 2004, Wardman 2009), which is logical, given that the objective of a practicum is training or educating novice teachers. However, a more balanced examination of the practicum experience can help teacher preparation experts and program planners, among others, refine their development and expectations of this vital part of ESL teacher education. After all, TESL students spend many hours in the classrooms of host teachers.

Interns in a practicum class are generally engaged in participant observation, reflecting on experiences, at the same time participating in the class. A practicum course in a university setting is usually taught by a practicum course instructor. Students attend their practicum host teacher's class to observe and perhaps engage in practice teaching, and are supported in the practicum class by reflective or other types of activities, including journal-writing (eg. McKay 2000). The benefits of this experience to the TESL student are at least partly contingent on their relationship with the host teacher.

The Practicum in General Education Research

Educational research has examined aspects of the practicum in the context of training teachers to work in primary and secondary contexts including the roles of the host teachers. Studies have looked at the benefits of being a host teacher (eg. Sinclair, Dawson, & Thistleton-Martin 2006), effective mentoring practices (Graham 2006; Kahn 2001), roles of host teachers (Ewart & Straw 2005; Koskela & Ganser 1998), dynamics between interns and hosts (eg. Veal & Rikard 1998), and more. These studies have yielded useful information about the practicum experience from various perspectives. However, the TESL practicum geared toward adult learners is somewhat different in nature from that found in primary and secondary level educational contexts. For one thing, the amount and the type of classroom management energy required in a primary or secondary school classroom is quite different from that in a classroom populated by adult ESL learners. The nature of the learners in these classrooms is quite different, as adult learners have different and presumably more urgent motives for learning than do regular school students. The single focus on language in an ESL classroom, together with the types of methods employed, makes the practicum likely to be of a different nature from the regular educational practicum; in adult ESL teachers need to

constantly walk a line between explicit and implicit teaching, given the fact that adult learners have advanced cognitive development and tend to have specific and often immediate needs. Adult ESL teachers also need to be concerned with developing speaking skills, unlike most of the literacy and content –focused activity found in regular school classrooms.

Research on Practicum Teachers/hosts

Only a few studies have concentrated on the TESL practicum from the perspective of teachers or host teachers. Johnson (2003) examined the development of her own identity as a host teacher by means of analyzing critical incidents which occurred during the hosting process. One of Johnson's interns a non-native speaker of English, gained the trust of learners, and grouped students along gender lines, in accordance with fundamental Muslim beliefs. This prompted Johnson to critically examine her own beliefs and preconceptions about the authority of the native speaker and the balance between equality issues and personal feelings in the classroom. Farrell (2007) reported on a case study of a practicum teacher/supervisor working with a nonnative speaking practicum intern, with the intern using guided reflection, and came to the realization that the intern's attitudes and instructional decisions were actually informed by personal educational experience rather than any content from her MA program.

While the work of Johnson (2003) and Farrell (2007) helps us to get a picture of the intense nature of the teaching and mentoring processes involved in TESL practicum contexts, there are few studies addressing the effects of hosting on the host teacher. Those which do tend to concentrate on how the host teachers see their role, rather than how the role affected their own work. One key such study is that of Payant and Murphy (2012) which looked at host teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in a MATESOL program in an American university. The authors employed a focus group of 11 host teachers and subsequently interviewed three in depth. In the end, four roles of cooperating teachers were identified: communicator; demystifier; catalyst for identity shifts; and mentor. Overarching themes in the authors' discussions with the participants were the need for more clarity of expectations of the host teachers, and the more existential question of what the knowledge core of an ESL teacher should be. It appeared from this study that the host teachers

held multiple and shifting roles as the practicum unfolded.

Malderez and Wedell (2007), in a comprehensive overview of processes and practices in teacher education, identify a number of roles of those who mentor teachers: acculturator, or guide to navigating the culture of the profession and the workplace; model, or example of how to manage aspects of the work in real time; support, or coach for novice teachers; sponsor, or trusted listener; educator, or guide to integrating various sources of knowledge including the theoretical and practical.

The practicum can be seen as an important component of teacher education as professional education. Wallace (1991) outlines three models of professional education: the crafts model, in which an apprentice imitates the skilled behavior of a professional and receives instruction and guidance; the applied science or scientific model, in which appropriate means are applied to achieve specific objectives, and the application of research based knowledge is paramount; the reflective model, which emphasizes the experience of professional actions and the experiential knowledge that comes with observing and thinking about the effects thereof. In any teacher education program there will be a blend of these three models, including the practicum host-intern relationship.

Malderez and Wedell (2007) and Payant and Murphy (2012) shed light on the roles of practicum host teachers and mentors, as expressed by the teachers themselves. However, an important next step is to explore the effects of hosting on the teachers' own practice in addition to their self perceptions.

Methodology

The present study was conducted as an exploratory case study of a group of nine host teachers who host practicum interns from TESL programs at a Canadian university, geared toward adult ESL learners. It, examines their perceptions of the hosting experience and their experiences of the possible benefits of hosting with regard to reflecting on their own teaching practice. The study was framed by two research questions:

1. How do TESL practicum host teachers perceive the hosting process?

2. Do TESL Practicum host teachers use the hosting process to reflect on their own practice? If so, how?

The participant teachers responded to an email to all host teachers who had taken interns over the past three years. They engaged in an individual semi-structured interview with the researcher for an hour.

Context of the Study

The practicum is supported by a practicum course (separate for undergraduate and MA students), which includes guides for observation, reflective activities, activities in which pooled observation and teaching experience are analyzed with reference to second language acquisition theories and TESL methodologies, and so on. The fundamental approach used in the practicum course is an ethnographic study of ESL classrooms based on participant observation.

The interns follow a code of conduct, intended to make the hosting experience the least stressful for the host teacher. The host teachers are given leeway in dealing with interns and are not required to mentor the interns, nor to rate their practice teaching, it is assumed that the practicum course on the university campus handles that. There is a site visit by the practicum coordinator in which he/she observes the intern practice teaching.

Participants

The participants were teachers who regularly hosted practicum interns from university TESL programs. The interns were required to complete 60 hours of practicum, with 20 hours of observed practice teaching, split between two venues for the two semesters of the academic year.

The participants were divided between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors and teachers in community-based programs, specifically Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). They were also divided between very senior teachers who had a long history of experience, and relative newcomers to the field, with more recent qualifications and fewer hosting experiences to draw on.

Table 1 presents a summary of the experience and qualifications of the participants. All names are pseudonyms.

Name	Type of program	Years teaching experience	TESL qualifications
Brian	LINC/community	20 years	Certificate (community college) 1997)
Dana	LINC/community, EAP	25 years	Certificate (university) 1991
Franca	LINC/community	33 years	Certificate (university) 1982
Glenda	LINC/community	16 years	Certificate (university) early 1990s
Debbie	LINC/community	30 years	Certificate (university) 1986
Doug	EAP - university	10 years	Certificate (university), MA (2015)
May	LINC/community	10 years	Certificate (community college), M.Ed. (2015)
Laila	LINC/community	5 years	Certificate (university) 2009
Linda	EAP - university	10 years	Certificate (university), MA (2014)

Table 1 Participant experience and qualifications

Procedures

The interview was structured around nine questions:

1. Where and when did you get your TESL teacher accreditation?
2. Describe your career as an ESL teacher.
3. How many times have you hosted teacher training interns?
4. What have been the benefits of the hosting experience, for you?
5. What have been some drawbacks of the hosting experience for you?
6. Tell me about some hosting experiences, good or bad.
7. Has hosting made you think about ESL teaching in general? If so, how?
8. Has hosting made you think about your own teaching? If so, how?
9. Has hosting changed the way you teach in any way? If so, how.

The questions served as a general guide to discussion, and interviewees were frequently asked to elaborate on points or clarify their recall of events. The questions were sequenced so as to activate the memories of participants and to prime them to recall events and then extrapolate from them to consider their own hosting experiences and their reflections on the possible consequences of the hosting.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes around the two research questions using NVivo data analysis software.

Results

Relevant themes emerged which helped answer both research questions. Responses showed how the host teachers perceived the hosting experience and how they felt it affected their practice. The interviews took slightly different directions with those who had older qualifications and longer teaching experience (over ten years teaching experience and qualifications more than ten years old) compared to those who had somewhat less experience and more recent qualifications.

The two groups which emerged were more or less equal in number:

More experienced cohort	Less experienced cohort
Brian	Doug
Franca	May
Dana	Linda
Glenda	Laila
Debbie	

Main Direction of the Discussions

Main topics which emerged from the interviews with both groups centred around “what I teach and HOW (the procedure).” The teachers experienced a feeling of being judged by interns, a sense that they “are watching.” The presence of interns helped them to feel more secure, validated their teaching methods; and they became somewhat more aware of their teaching style.

For the less experienced cohort, however, the additional areas of discussion centred more around “What I teach and WHY (the insight, deeper reflection). The less experienced instructors, two of whom taught university-level EAP, showed a readiness to accept interns’ feedback and use the experience with the intern to gain awareness of their own teaching, and to discuss critical incidents with the interns.

A number of overarching themes appeared, some common to all participants, some specific to the “new cohort.”

Themes

All of the participants reported some common perceptions and experiences in hosting interns:

1. Interns make you change routines
2. Hosting can make you admit mistakes
3. Hosting can make you self aware
4. Hosting can be an unsatisfactory experience due to behavioral or communication issues

1. Changing routines.

Changing of teaching routines was discussed by most participants, more or less experienced, an effect of having a guest in the class and the need to make sure things were organized in a satisfying manner. This was usually in an effort to put one’s best efforts on display in order to show mastery of the craft of teaching, or to help the intern have a rich experience. Dana pointed out that she made changes in order to show how to make an “engaged” class:

Because they come only for a couple of hours, and I bring my best lessons, so I actually change my lesson... if I know they are coming, I try to bring the best stuff to that class because I want to show them how a class can be engaging, engaged in materials.

Similarly, May changed her routine in an effort to ensure that the intern would have exposure to range of techniques and methods:

I pay a little more attention making sure that, I have touched on all of the skills or on different methods of delivering a lesson.

These observations were shared by most participants and generally presented as a basic fact of the hosting experience and a source of some pride. It is interesting to note that the TESL program requirements for host teachers made no mention of a need to show interns any particular types or varieties of classroom activity, yet the hosts see this as a fundamental responsibility.

2. Admitting mistakes.

Similar to the adjustment of regular teaching routines, admitting mistakes was also described as an almost inevitable effect of the hosting experience. Debbie dwelt a bit longer than others on this aspect of the hosting experience, seeing it as a basic part of the responsibilities she had shouldered as a host:

...you are doing something, and if it is not working, ... I will say I really should have done this before doing that, or I should have you know...

This basic sentiment was echoed by others, with a general consensus that it was a fundamental aspect of the job, a need to be as well prepared and as honest as possible in the situation.

3. Being self-aware or self-conscious.

The common thread among the responses from both groups was a sense of being on display or of needing to work with a constant eye to showing one’s best. Connected intricately with this was a feeling of a requirement to be self-aware or self-conscious. Glenda remarked succinctly that she felt the eyes of an intern made, discuss what she did and the reasons behind her pedagogical choices:

when I have somebody watching me, I am more aware of what I do and how I do it and I am prepared to share what I do and talk about what I do and how I do it and why.

Perhaps the most poignant comment on this was Franca’s metaphor comparing routine classroom activity to having a dirty house when house guests visit, and remarked that sometimes when interns are in class she thinks

I just cannot do it this morning, and I have to do something creative... more creative...

Participants were quite frank in telling the researcher how the presence of a guest in class caused them to “clean house,” and try to put their best work forward, at the same time requiring themselves to think, even briefly, about their motives for their pedagogical decisions.

4. *Satisfactory/unsatisfactory experience.*

The participants from both groups were eager to accentuate the positive aspects of hosting, and in general, satisfaction was largely linked to having help in class, integrating the intern into the class, and learning from interns. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, was presented as a result of communication or behavioral issues, and never linked to interns having inadequate performance as practice teachers or anything related to the conduct of the class. Participants from both groups were clear on the positive effects of making sure interns were engaged and active in the classroom. Dana summed up the sense of needing have an intern engaged in class as something obvious and fundamental to the success of the hosting experience:

I personally like to have the person involved, it's nice to watch, but I like to have them involved in the group

Meanwhile, Brian pointed out the potential of learning teaching methods from interns, whom he feels are exposed to newer teaching methods as part of their being trained in state of the art educational experiences in the TESL programs:

I always saw that as an opportunity to also learn, and I think being in school, you are exposed to a lot of the latest and greatest methodologies and approaches.

It was also noted by many that interns were a source of support and an extra pair of hands in managing what are often multi-level and continuous intake classes. Doug in particular told several stories of how interns lightened his workload:

The way I incorporated the intern was I gave her the same marking sheets that I was using, the same rubrics that I was using ... it was a wonderful thing ... even as a new teacher that her ability to at least rank their spoken English and clarity, you know, it came in roughly equal to mine. Satisfying hosting experiences, then, were linked to having engaged and helpful interns with whom one could communicate as an equal.

Dissatisfaction with hosting stemmed from difficulties with intern behavior or challenges in communicating with interns whose L1 was not English. Dana remarked

I remember having this person teach a class and Oh my... like the simple words she could not spell, she was giving language that was incorrect.

Other communication challenges had to do with silent and reluctant interns who did not communicate well with the host teacher or the students. On the other hand, very confident and/or garrulous interns were cited as a

frustration in hosting. Glenda put it best when recalling several such interns:

I remember one who never stopped talking, ... he would come in to the class and would start lecturing...some come and they are a little over confident.

In the end, it appears that host teacher dissatisfaction with the experience is relatively rare, and the host teachers see the source of dissatisfaction in the behavior of the interns rather than anything they have done themselves.

Reflections from New Cohort

To this list can be added some themes specific to the newer cohort of participants:

1. Hosting is an opportunity to improve your teaching
2. Hosting raises your awareness of what you do
3. Hosting makes you accountable for your work
4. It is important to discuss critical incidents with an intern

1. Improving teaching.

Hosting interns was seen by the newer cohort as a prime opportunity to actually improve one's teaching. Beyond the previously discussed ideas of becoming self aware and putting on the best "show" for interns, these observations and reflections directly linked the hosting to being a better teacher. May stated that hosting is intrinsically a learning experience for her:

I like to think that I am constantly learning new things and improving the way that I can help the students learn....

She also sees hosting as a mirror image of the experience that an intern may have:

When I was doing my Master's, I went to the classes to look for things to help me in the class, and everything I heard or learned in school, the second question is how is that going to make me better in class. So it continues that process when I have [an intern].

Similarly, Doug stated very efficiently that (the hosting experience) makes me want to do better

The newer cohort of participants were clearly enthused about the hosting experience as a catalyst for improving their own teaching, with an underlying sense that their teaching methods and approaches were not seen as static or complete, but in a process of renewal and refinement based on reflection. The presence of practicum interns

appears to have played a role in sparking some of that reflection.

2. Raised awareness.

In a similar vein, the newer cohort of host teachers noted that being a host raises one’s awareness of what one does in class, and why. They tended to use words such as “awareness” and “reflection” in doing so. Doug observes that this is a true benefit of the process, not a mere epiphenomenon:

One of the key benefits that I noticed initially was it forced me to really think about what I was doing. It is adding to that cycle of reflection.

Similarly, Laila sees that hosting raises her awareness of her practice and pushed her to expand her repertoire:

I think it makes us more aware of the methodology. So it does make you more aware that you should be using different methods.... It makes you again a lot more aware of your delivery are you doing exactly what you are supposed to be doing? Are your students understanding?

May puts it quite directly by simply noting that the actual presence of another in class sparks introspection:

There is somebody else there trying to learn what I am doing; it definitely makes me think of how I teach what I teach.

The experience of hosting appears to push these host teachers into a reflective state wherein they see their work in a critical way.

3. Being accountable.

It was also apparent from the interviews with the newer cohort that the experience of hosting makes them feel accountable. It seems to take the teachers out of the moment and inspire them to consider their responsibility to their students and beyond the classroom. Laila summarized the feeling of needing to be accountable by drawing attention to the objectives of her classroom work and the needs it may address:

And why as a teacher I am doing this and so they are getting why I am doing this and the purpose of the assignment that I tell the students, but I am also trying to give them the bigger picture because they are only observing part, and so, you know, this is building on this and the goal is the next week and the purpose is...

Similarly, Linda appears somewhat surprised at her own realization that a raised sense of accountability may be subconscious, but powerful:

I guess it makes you be more accountable, so... Maybe I do not think I think of this at a conscious level, but I guess at some level, I need to be

more accountable. I need to be more accountable in terms of why I choose to do certain things in the classroom and thinking about expected or anticipated outcomes of tasks ...

This sense of self awareness and movement toward a critical assessment of one’s own practice is a powerful effect of hosting practicum interns for these teachers.

4. Discussing critical incidents.

A final but still important point which was raised by the newer cohort of teachers was the importance of discussing issues with interns, specifically classroom experiences including critical incidents in which learners displayed unexpected behaviors or plans achieved unexpected effects. Linda expresses satisfaction with the experience of discussing incidents with an intern:

Often we would reflect if something happens during the lesson that was not expected or maybe surprised me, I would talk to them. Sometime we would just talk about what transpired, and how I could avoid it in the future or if it actually contributed to the course or the lesson or something like that, or how I should have dealt with something differently.

This type of collaborative and honest discussion was commonly reported among the newer cohort of teachers. It represents a movement on their part toward reflection on teaching and a critical stance on one’s own work, together with the other processes in which they engaged with interns, such as collaborating, using the experience to raise awareness, accountability, and overall improvement of teaching.

Discussion

The research questions which guided the present study are:

1. How do TESL practicum host teachers perceive the hosting process?
2. Do TESL Practicum host teachers use the hosting process to reflect on their own practice? If so, how?

The data show that the host teachers’ perceptions of the experience are generally positive, and that they all used it to reflect on their own practice in a variety of ways.

Hosting interns had various impacts on the work of these participant teachers. They felt responsible for the education of the interns, attempting to show their best work, plan carefully, and be a role model, while feeling on display or self aware and self conscious. These align with the roles identified by Malderez and Wedell (2007), who identify host teacher roles of model and

educator, and Payant and Murphy (2012) who identify the host teacher roles of communicator and mentor. The reported feelings of being self aware or self conscious appear to be unique to the present study, however, and represent more an internal affective state of the participant teachers, than a perception of a role in the host – intern dynamic.

The participant teachers in the present study acknowledged to the interns when classroom activities worked out less satisfactorily than planned, worked to make them part of the class culture, communicated and watched in order to learn from them, and generally enjoyed the hosting experience, with some exceptions. The host teachers in general discussed how the interns validated their teaching approaches and how they felt the sense of being on display with a visitor in the classroom. They spoke about how they taught and how they dealt with the intern. The less experienced cohort of host teachers in particular eagerly related stories and expressed satisfaction at having collaborated with interns, having discussed critical classroom incidents with them, having learned from interns and become more self aware as a result of their interactions.

The data in the present study imply that the hosting experience is more than a master-apprentice dynamic. As such, it fits much more with a reflective model of professional education than a craft or applied science model, as described by Wallace (1991). Interns have a great deal to assimilate and manage in the practicum internship, needing to get comfortable in a classroom setting, establish rapport with the host teacher, follow the script of lessons, sort out the aims and purposes of what is occurring, and so on, not to mention needing to prepare to take some control when practice teaching. The host teachers, meanwhile, are not simply performing their roles as usual. They are conscious of taking on an extra role, as a role model for a novice (see Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Payant and Murphy, 2012), and the resulting need to do one's best to show well planned and executed lessons. All host teachers take the need to be "on stage" as a given, but how they handle it differs somewhat according to experience and qualifications.

The less experienced cohort of host teachers show an extra measure of engagement with the hosting experience. This is manifest as a desire to interact with interns as equals, as Laila remarks,

...it takes me out of my automatic pilot mode because I know somebody is trying to learn something or trying to observe something Sometimes when the intern is here ... there is

something ah that they can pass on to me that I can learn from or something any comment that might be useful to me

Linda makes a remarkable comment about learning directly from interns:

For me it is an opportunity to share with somebody who is a peer and learning about methodology and having an opportunity on some occasions to get feedback, you know, depending on the intern if they feel comfortable giving me feedback, so from that aspect, I think it is a really healthy dynamic or a healthy relationship.

Similarly, Doug reflects on the fact that interns in his classes become very much a part of the overall class dynamic:

They so often become a class member or a member of the classroom community, and they are in there. I do not recognize them as someone from outside observing. They become a member of the class.

These remarks and observations about dealing with interns as peers and collaborators were largely absent from the discourse of the more experienced teachers, who saw their role as much more in terms of mentorship or leadership, and tended to be more critical of interns. Dana recalled instances in which interns surprised her with their lack of confidence or skill in her classroom:

You ask them to prepare a mini lesson... it took them forever, and I am going like... really? I mean, I did it from the beginning and I knew it took some time, but it wasn't as difficult as they make it out.

Similarly, Glenda recalls interns would communicate inappropriately:

A lot of the time, you know, you have your interns coming in and they are like this long stream of academic language or very high level English and it is like 3-4 level class...

What explains the particular perceptions of the less experienced teachers? It might be length of experience, level of educational qualifications for teaching, or type of program in which they work. It is perhaps the case that the less experienced cohort of teachers were more open to learning and reflecting on the hosting experience because of their feeling of being in a state of professional development themselves. Although all had significant years of teaching experience and credentials at least 5 or 6 years old, they were more junior than the more experienced cohort, who all had at least 16 years of experience. Their own experiences as practicum interns were much more recent, perhaps within conscious memory, giving them an added feeling of empathy for interns and an experiential sense of what might make the experience work well for all involved. As well,

three of four teachers in the less experienced cohort had MA degrees in applied linguistics/second language education, whereas none of the more experienced cohort had this type of degree. This might have given them a different sense of professionalism as teachers among the new cohort, and a different body of knowledge to bring to the experience. Finally, two of the less experienced cohort taught in a university context, in a program in which teachers were required to develop their own materials and collaborate closely with colleagues on achieving program objectives and evaluation and so on. This collaborative and more intensely intellectual environment may have affected their perceptions of their roles as professionals compared to community/LINC teachers.

Conclusion

The present study is an exploration, a set of purely qualitative case studies with practicum host teachers. It is not possible to generalize broadly from this set of data, but some intriguing and potentially useful themes have emerged nonetheless. The first lesson learned here is that practicum host teachers are more than silent players in the teacher education enterprise, but rather, are active agents in the education of novice TESL professionals. They work to show their best work to interns, try their best to draw on their various sources of knowledge to plan lessons which will help interns to grasp the nature of the lesson planning and execution process. They feel an intern's eyes on them, and they use the resulting stress to do their best, even admitting mistakes and attempting to learn from interns. Some host teachers, particularly less experienced ones, take the hosting experience to be a chance to collaborate with a peer with whom they can consult and communicate more openly. Host teachers all use the hosting experience to reflect, some on the hosting dynamic itself or on the nature of teaching and learning, and some go further, actually adjusting and adapting their teaching practice as result of the hosting experience.

Teacher education programs which incorporate practicum may benefit from the knowledge emerging from this study. Communication with host teachers is essential, as they are indeed frontline workers in the education endeavor, and experience some stress from the hosting experience. Holding sessions in which teachers have a chance to share their hosting experiences, including best practices or stories of successful and less successful hosting experiences

can help harness the energy generated by the hosting experience for the benefit of all aspects of a TESL program.

Perhaps the most intriguing outtake from this study is the fact that hosting interns encourages teachers to reflect on their planning and execution of lessons. This is a powerful source of professional development for teachers of all backgrounds, teaching in all types of ESL programs. Short of keeping journals or conducting action research, rare experiences for any teacher, there are few opportunities for practice-embedded professional development or reflection experiences for ESL teachers. Attendance at workshops and conferences, if available, serve as stimulants for reflecting on one's practice from an abstract perspective. The present study offers another readily available source of practice-embedded professional development, the hosting of a TESL intern. The mere presence of an intern in one's class appears to stimulate thought and reflection non one's teaching practice from various perspectives. This can be a powerful source of professional development, especially if experiences are pooled.

The present study presents a tantalizing picture of host teachers and their feelings and reactions to the hosting experience, and lays a basis for further study. This study relies on retrospective recall of experiences and reactions to events, and future research using more complex data collection methods can reveal a more fine-grained picture of how host teachers are affected by hosting. Research in this area using more data courses, for example, classroom observation or teacher journal writing, can chart the ongoing dynamics of the hosting experience and explore some of the reasons why teachers may react as they do, as well as explore aspects of the experience which may affect their perceptions of their work and their teaching practice.

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