

Professionalization of TEFL in Korea: The Roads behind and ahead*

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TEFL in Korea has gone through many changes and challenges driven by the societal needs and expectations from within and beyond Korea. The emergence of English as a global language has also led to reshaping its goals and approaches to achieve them. This paper discusses what has been done and needs to be done for development of TEFL, focusing on the teacher education programs as they are the key to realization of the curriculum rhetoric and to professionalization of TEFL in Korea. The results of a questionnaire survey on Korean teachers' perception of 'good English teachers' and professional development are discussed along with the perception of TEFL as a profession. Major issues of teacher education programs including curriculum, trainers and trainees, and evaluation are examined in order to see how successfully they fulfill their educational goals and missions: professional development and teacher empowerment. The emerging issues in regard to recruiting the native English speakers as classroom instructors and teacher trainers based on the myths are also discussed. Suggestions are made on how to turn the myths and the curriculum rhetoric into a positive reality.

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One indication of the degree of professionalization of a field is the extent to which “the methods and procedures employed by members of a profession are based on a body of theoretical knowledge and research” (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, cited in Richards & Nunan, 2000). Richards & Nunan (2000) claims that a substantial degree of professionalization in second language teaching has taken place in the last twenty years or so. Language teaching has achieved a sense of autonomy with its own knowledge base, paradigms, and research agenda. According to them, however, the field of teacher education is a relatively underexplored one in both second and foreign language teaching. While there is a body of practice in second language teacher education — based almost exclusively on intuition and common sense — until recently there has been little systematic study of second language teaching processes that could provide a theoretical basis for deriving practices in second language teacher education. Lange (2000) also points out that minimal attention is paid to the development of teachers in second languages either conceptually or research-wise.

TEFL in Korea has gone through many changes and challenges driven by the societal needs and expectations from within and beyond Korea. The emergence of English as a global language has also led to reshaping its goals and approaches to achieve them. However, the teachers who are supposedly the major task force do not feel that they are ready to meet these changes and challenges. Teacher education programs have been developed and implemented on a macro scale, particularly for elementary school teachers of English, and regularly through regional teacher education centers and institutes. Whether these teacher education programs are effective enough to nurture and empower the teachers or not has been questioned anecdotally as well as through literature. The purpose of this paper is to examine what has been done and needs to be done for further development of TEFL, focusing on the teacher education programs as they are the key to realization of the curriculum rhetoric and to professionalization of TEFL in Korea. The results of a questionnaire survey on Korean teachers' perception of ‘good English teachers’ and professional development are discussed along with the perception

of TEFL as a profession. Major elements of teacher education programs including curriculum, trainers and trainees, and evaluation are examined in order to see how successfully they fulfill their educational goals and missions: professional development and teacher empowerment. The emerging issues in regard to recruiting the native English speakers (NES) as classroom instructors and teacher trainers based on the public faith or myths are also discussed. Suggestions are made on how to turn these myths and the curriculum rhetoric into a positive reality.

The following research questions are addressed in this paper:

1. What is teacher education and what is it for?
2. What are the Korean English teachers' perception of 'good teachers' and 'teacher development'?
3. What are the major issues and concerns with TEFL and teacher education in Korea?
4. What can be done for development of TEFL in Korea?

TEACHER TRAINING, TEACHER EDUCATION, AND TEACHER (OR PROFESSIONAL) DEVELOPMENT

There have been different concepts and focuses on teacher education. Richards and Nunan (2000) defines 'teacher training' as approaches that view teacher preparation as familiarizing student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom and 'teacher education' as approaches that involve teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and strategies for critical self-awareness and self-evaluation. Lange (2000) suggests that 'teacher development' is a term used in the literature to describe a process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers (e.g., Joyce and Weil, 1980; Lange, 1983). Lange (1983) has argued for the use of the term, distinguishing it from training and preparation as encompassing more and allowing for continued growth both before and throughout a career.

In Korea, the in-service teacher education institutions including those run by regional governments and those affiliated to universities are named as either 'Teacher Education Institute' or 'Teacher Education Center', with a few named as 'Teacher Training Center/Institute'. However, it seems to be a simple matter of translation of Korean word '*yeonsuwon*' into English, not necessarily reflecting the differences in the organizational purposes or goals. None of them has been named as 'Teacher Development Center or Institute' even though teacher development is stated in their programs as part of the educational goals and missions. In the literature published in major Korean academic journals, 'teacher training' and 'teacher education' have been used exchangeably, with a few including 'teacher development.' In this paper, 'teacher education' and 'teacher development' are used exchangeably, both of which refer to a continual growth in their professionalism and profession.

There can be many different reasons for pursuing professional development. Bailey et al. (2001) suggested the following as some of them:

- 1) To acquire new knowledge and skills
- 2) To keep up with and be prepared to cope with changes
- 3) To get an increase in income and prestige
- 4) To get empowered (through new knowledge)
- 5) To combat negativity in our teaching contexts
- 6) To overcome sense of isolation (through networking)
- 7) To expand our conceptual understanding of teaching and our vocabulary for discussing that knowledge
- 8) To gain confirmation or reaffirmation that what we do is worthwhile.

These can be fulfilled through many different ways, including the following:

- 1) Participating in professional associations concerned with the teaching of English or other foreign languages, including attending local, national, or international conferences
- 2) Subscribing to journals and regularly reading periodicals in the teaching of English and in related fields
- 3) Placing one's name on mailing lists of major ESL/EFL textbook publishers and information clearinghouses or resource centers

- 4) Offering to review texts for publishers or journals
- 5) Serving on textbook selection committees in your ESL[/EFL] program
- 6) Working on curriculum development or textbook preparation teams in your ESL[/EFL] program
- 7) Attending or giving in-service workshops and seminars for teachers
- 8) Participating in research projects, especially those which enable you to work with researchers and other professionals who are engaged in analyzing issues relevant to your classroom
- 9) Working collaboratively with professionals in other fields (Crandall, 1999, p. 507).

KOREAN SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION: A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A questionnaire survey was conducted in order to examine how Korean English teachers perceive 'good English teacher' and 'teacher education' and what their needs are for their professional development. The following is the result of the survey.

Subjects

One hundred and fifty five secondary school teachers of English participated in the survey. They are all based in Gwangju-Jeonnam region. When the survey was conducted, they were attending teacher education programs held in January, 2005, at two different teacher education institutes. The author participated in those programs as a teacher trainer and was able to collect the data with the help from the supervisors at each institute.

61.4 percent were female (n=94) and 38.6 percent were male (n=61). Their age ranged from 20s to over 50, 20-29 (16.2%, n=25), 30-39 (27.9%, n=43), 40-49 (43.5%, n=67), and over 50 (12.3%, n=19) respectively. Their overall teaching experiences varied from 1 year to over 20 years, showing 1-5 years

(22.2%, n=34), 6-10 years (9.8%, n=15), 11-15 years (17.0%, n=26), 16-20 years (20.9%, n=32), over 21 years (30.1%, n=46). Also, 53.9 percent (n=76) were teaching grades seven to nine, whereas 46.1% (n=65) were teaching grades ten to twelve.

Instrument

A questionnaire was developed in three different parts: First, the subjects' demographic information was taken. Question items included age, gender, teaching experience, and teaching level. In addition, the subjects were asked to self-evaluate their own English language proficiency and teaching ability because their perceptions would likely influence their interest in opportunities to improve their English language skills and teaching ability; The second part focused on their needs of teacher development; The last part was concerned with their thoughts on 'good English teacher' and perception of teacher development. The questionnaire was written and administered in English and it was ensured that no subjects had problems with understanding the questionnaire.

Results

It has been suggested anecdotally and observed in my own teacher training classes that the overall English proficiency of the secondary teachers of English in Korea has been gradually improved¹. However, it seemed that the

¹ Since 1993 I have been teaching several teacher training courses for both elementary and secondary teachers of English in Teacher Education Institutes/Centers in Gwangju and Jeonnam as well as in other regions in Korea. The classes for the secondary English teachers I taught are Teaching English Pronunciation, Classroom English, and Testing and Evaluation. Teaching the classes in English only, I have observed how the teacher trainees interact with me as instructor and their peers in English. It seems quite obvious that the overall English proficiency level of the secondary English teachers has been gradually raised particularly as they have been pushed by the Ministry of Education to teach English through English since 2001.

teachers were not confident in their own English proficiency, particularly in productive skills like speaking and writing.

TABLE 1 shows the result of the self-evaluation of the subjects' English proficiency and teaching ability.

TABLE 1
Self-evaluation of English Proficiency and Teaching Ability

Areas	Scale	Very good (%)	Good	A little good	A little poor	poor	very poor
speaking		1.3	21.1	40.8	19.1	15.8	2.0
listening		4.0	26.8	38.9	17.4	10.1	2.7
reading		10.5	46.7	21.7	7.9	11.2	2.0
writing		3.3	30.9	33.6	23.0	7.9	1.3
vocabulary		5.9	32.2	31.6	21.1	7.9	1.3
grammar		16.6	39.7	21.9	10.6	8.6	2.6
pronunciation		3.3	36.4	35.1	12.6	7.3	5.3
cultural understanding		6.0	34.4	27.8	22.5	5.3	4.0
teaching ability		3.3	27.0	42.8	13.8	10.5	2.6
classroom management		13.8	35.5	26.3	9.9	7.9	6.6
evaluation		5.3	36.7	33.3	11.3	10.7	2.7
classroom English		6.6	27.2	35.1	17.2	11.3	2.6

As shown in TABLE 1, the teachers rated their skills in reading, grammar, and classroom management higher than other areas. The three skills were assessed positively by 78.9%, 78.2%, and 75.6% of the subjects respectively. The lowest rated skill is speaking (63.2%) followed by writing (67.8%) and classroom English (68.2%). Butler (2004) found out the same result in her survey study of Korean elementary school teachers of English that their receptive skills were self-rated higher than their productive skills. It lies in the fact that in a typical EFL context like Korea, teachers and students can have an easy access to reading and listening materials in English thanks to the development of economy, mass media, publication, and information

However, it still needs to be closely examined what should be the standards for the teachers' English proficiency and to what extent they actually meet them. The teacher education programs should be also developed and implemented in such a way that they can cater for the actual needs of the teachers.

technology but the target language is not used as a means of daily life communication. They do not have sufficient number of opportunities to use both spoken and written English so that their performance cannot be improved whereas they may improve their competence in those skills. Then this brings down their level of confidence on them, even to a lower level than they actually are.

It is believed that the teachers' perception of their own English proficiency and teaching ability would influence on their needs of improvement of the English skills and their professional development. Based on this premise, the subjects were asked in what areas they think they need to get improved for teacher development.

TABLE 2
Needs of Teacher Development

Areas	Scale	Completely agree(%)	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Completely disagree
speaking		59.1	22.1	2.7	2.7	2.7	4.7
listening		60.4	20.8	2.7	2.0	4.7	9.4
reading		45.6	33.6	5.4	2.7	7.4	5.4
writing		43.0	31.8	9.9	3.3	6.0	6.0
vocabulary		42.7	31.3	8.0	4.7	9.3	4.0
grammar		33.1	31.8	16.2	8.1	8.1	2.7
pronunciation		35.7	32.9	14.0	8.4	6.3	2.8
cultural							
understanding		31.6	33.6	14.7	8.4	5.6	3.5
teaching ability		44.4	28.5	11.8	3.5	5.6	6.3
classroom							
management		33.6	28.7	18.2	10.5	5.6	3.5
testing skill		35.4	29.9	17.4	6.9	6.3	4.2
classroom							
English		38.0	33.1	14.8	2.8	5.6	5.6

As shown in TABLE 2, the most needed skill for improvement was classroom English (85.9%) followed by teaching ability/writing (84.7%), reading (84.6%), and speaking/listening (83.9%). It seems to show that the teachers consider all 4 language skills and English teaching ability as important and want to further improve their skills in these areas regardless of their current level of skills.

Next, the teachers were asked who they thought a good English teacher is and what attributes are the most important to become one.

TABLE 3
Thoughts on a Good English Teacher

Areas	Scale Completely agree (%)	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Completely disagree
carefully prepares lessons	58.3	21.2	5.3	2.6	6.6	6.0
enjoys teaching & loves students	70.7	12.7	0.7	2.7	3.3	10.0
is willing to help students extra hours	40.5	33.1	9.5	6.1	4.1	6.8
has good English pronunciation	20.3	37.2	25.7	10.1	4.7	2.0
stimulates independent learning	36.2	37.6	10.7	4.7	6.7	4.0
has good English proficiency	32.2	35.6	16.1	4.7	8.1	3.4
teaches in a meaningful and fun way	55.0	24.8	6.7	0.7	6.7	6.0
has a good sense of humor	30.6	27.9	25.2	5.4	7.5	3.4
motivates students to study English	51.7	29.5	4.77	2.0	4.0	8.1
teaches in easy and comprehensible ways	50.3	32.2	3.48	2.0	6.0	6.0
identifies students' problems	34.9	37.6	12.8	4.05	7.4	3.4
adjusts to students' level of understanding	47.0	30.9	8.1	2.0	6.0	6.0
has good cultural understanding	26.2	34.9	20.8	6.0	11.4	0.7
effectively uses teaching materials	35.8	37.2	12.2	2.7	9.5	2.7
is interested in students and teaches enthusiastically	59.3	22.7	3.3	0.7	5.3	8.7
well manages classrooms	24.8	33.6	23.5	7.4	10.1	0.7
promotes positive learning experiences	43.0	25.5	15.4	3.4	8.7	4.0
is impartial	33.1	27.0	19.6	6.1	9.5	4.7
teaches English in English	21.6	35.8	24.3	10.8	6.1	1.4
is creative	33.8	35.1	17.6	3.4	6.1	4.1
continues professional development	62.2	19.6	4.1	1.4	6.1	6.8

All the items include something about either “what a good teacher is like” or “what a good teacher does” and there is no significant difference in the

responses. However, it seems that the subjects value teaching efficiency or excellence more than their personality factor. The items such as “teaches in a meaningful and fun way (86.5%),” “adjusts to students' level of understanding (86.0%),” “teaches in easy and comprehensible ways (85.98%),” and “motivates students to study English (85.97%)” received more positive responses than those including “has a good sense of humor (83.7%),” “has good English pronunciation (83.2%),” “has good cultural understanding (81.9%),” and “is impartial (79.7%).” This tendency was reconfirmed (with a few counterexamples) by their responses to the request of selecting three most important attributes of a good English teacher as follows:

Enjoys teaching and loves students 27.9%
Carefully prepares lessons 18.4%
Is interested in students and teaches enthusiastically 12.2%
Motivates students to study English 9.5%
Promotes positive learning experiences 6.8%
Teaches in meaningful and fun ways 4.8%
Teaches in easy and comprehensible ways 4.1%
Adjusts to the students' level of understanding 4.1%
Continues professional development 4.1%
Is willing to help students extra hours 2.0%
Stimulates independent learning 1.4%
Has good English proficiency 1.4%
Is creative 1.4%
Identifies students' problems 0.7%
Has good cultural understanding 0.7%
Effectively uses teaching materials 0.7%

This is quite the opposite to the results of an informal survey I conduct with undergraduate English majors in my “Understanding of TESOL” class every year. The students value and appreciate the teachers' personality factors such as “friendly, impartial, caring, understanding, patient,” more than their teaching ability. Lee (2000) and Kim (2002) confirmed this in their questionnaire survey on the quality of a good English teacher. It was found out that enthusiasm of teaching was believed by teachers to be one of the

most important quality whereas equal treatment of students was thought to be one of the most important teacher quality by students. It is important to research on the match/mismatch of the student/teacher perception of 'good teachers' in order to cope with the discrepancy between the two parties and produce more positive learning and teaching outcome.

TEFL AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN KOREA: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Status of TEFL as a Profession and Identity of TEFL Professionals

It has not been long before TEFL or ELT was recognized as an independent, scholarly discipline or a professional area in Korea. It lies in the two major factors which are closely interrelated: First, a low rank and status of teaching and teachers in a rigidly hierarchical Korean academic circle; Second, lack of understanding of TEFL as a professional area which requires its own knowledge base, paradigm and research agenda.

Literature with its long history and tradition has been considered and ranked top as a noble, sublime study and research area followed by language study or linguistics, and teaching at the very bottom of the ladder of English-related disciplines. The relative easiness of being an English teacher for native English speakers and some Korean nationals serves as a good reason for a low rank. Morrow (2003, cited in McBeath, 2003) claimed that ELT is the most international profession in the world but lacks status because it is all too easy to join. However, the diverse academic background and work experiences that many TEFLers including the TESOL Ph.D. holders have are believed to be another reason for TEFL to be downgraded in the Korean academic society. In Korean culture and context, diversity or mix-up is not valued but stigmatized as 'non-pure' or 'unauthoritative.'

Second, TEFL is perceived as an area that does not have its own knowledge base, paradigms, and research agenda. The classification of research fields set by Korea Research Foundation also seems to reflect this, in

which TEFL or TEFL-related areas are categorized in three ways: A0110 Applied linguistics as a subcategory of linguistics; A3108 English education as a subcategory of English language studies; and C7015 English education as a subcategory of teaching subject matters. Unlike English literature and linguistics, TEFL does not stand alone with its own subcategories. This has had a great impact on many aspects of TEFL professionals' life, including their identity, status, and research grants. In the same vein, lack of understanding of TEFL as a professional area is shown in the university curriculum for English education majors which consists of a larger number of courses and faculty in literature and linguistics than in TEFL. Pae (2002) suggested that 70% faculty of the English Education Department in the universities nationwide are in the areas of literature and linguistics. In many universities, the Departments of English Language and Literature, English Education, and English (Studies) are more like triplets whose only significant difference is in their names, not in their looks and characteristics. Due to the education reform driven by MOE in late 1990s, English Education Departments started to have somewhat different curriculum from that of the other English-related departments with a more focus on TEFL courses. The same faculty composition, however, has been one of the biggest difficulties for bringing in more drastic changes as needed. I speculate that this might have brought about the creation of TESOL programs that have more TESOL-specific curriculum and faculty as it is easier and more often than not, more efficient to make a new department than to remold the existing one which involves a painful procedure of negotiation and coordination among the faculty and administrators.

English (Language) Education (or EE/ELT) vs. TESOL

TEFL in Korea has been developed in many ways for the past two decades. The majority of the current TEFL organizations were newly founded or renamed during this time period, in order to represent a diverse regions and special interest groups, and have grown to become major academic societies

with a large membership body and active domestic and international activities.² TEFL has taken off as one of the most competitive and attractive study areas. Some universities offer more than one TEFL-related programs under different names including ‘English education, TESOL, Teaching Young Learners.’ With an increasing demand of TEFL professionals, more positions have been offered to the TEFL Ph.D. holders in English departments and some professors of English literature or linguistics have switched (or interconnected) their professional interests to TEFL as well.

As TEFL emerged as an attractive field due to the growth and expansion of public English education and private TEFL-related market, universities began to offer TEFL certificate and/or degree programs in addition to the existing ‘yeongeoggyoyuk or English Education (EE)’ programs. All these new programs are named as ‘TESOL,’ which seems to be their marketing strategy to make it sound more innovative and catchy for the same reason why MBA and CPA are never referred to their Korean translation, and above all, distinct from the existing EE programs. Most of these programs are not associated with EE programs and run by their own administrative structure, faculty and curriculum. As a result, now we see the two supposedly same but different

² The oldest TEFL organization in Korea, The University Language Laboratory Association of Korea (ULLA) was founded in 1965 for college English teachers but renamed as The Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) in 1994 in order to include elementary and secondary school teachers of English as members (<http://www.kate.or.kr>). The second oldest organization, The Applied Linguistics Association of Korea (ALAK) was founded in 1978 (<http://www.alak.or.kr>). The younger organizations include Yeongnam English Teachers' Association (YETA, 1989-2001, now Pan-Korea English Teachers' Association (PKETA, 2002-present) (<http://www.pketa.org>), Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Korea TESOL, 1992-present) (<http://www.kotesol.org>), Honam English Teachers' Association (HETA, 1995-2005, now Global English Teachers' Association (GETA, 2005-present) (<http://heta.web.riss4u.net>), Korea Association of Foreign Languages Education (KAFLE, 1995-present), Korea Association of Primary English Education (KAPEE, 1995-present) (<http://www.kapee.org>), Korea Association of Multi-media Assisted Language Learning (KAMALL, 1997-present) (<http://www.kamall.or.kr>) and this is not an exhaustive list by any means.

programs being into rivalry with each other, which is contrary to the problem with the supposedly different but the same programs in English Language and Literature, English Education, and English Studies described above. This has also created somewhat misled and dichotomous public perception on them as follows:

<i>Yeongeog Gyoyuk programs</i>	vs	<i>TESOL programs</i>
Theoretical		practical
academic		non-academic
taught by Korean professors		taught by native English-speaking instructors
may issue a teacher's license		issue a teaching certificate (co-issued by foreign partners)

The major characteristics of TESOL programs described above are mainly what they are publicized for. Here, the following questions are raised: What do we gain and lose out of having EE and TESOL programs separately?; Is it or is it not possible to make one program that has all the merits and strengths that are divided into the two programs?; Can these short-term TESOL certificate programs produce as competitive and qualified teachers as they advertise?: If the two programs choose to remain to be separate, what can be the win-win strategies for both? In order to answer to these questions, a thorough examination should be made on both programs focusing on the qualification of the faculty, curriculum, instructional strategies, evaluation, and the effectiveness of the program in terms of the program participants' TEFL professional knowledge and skill that they acquire through the programs, their employment rate, and their actual professional performance on the job. More cooperation and dialogue need to be carried out between the two programs in order to help each other grow and fulfill their educational missions respectively and jointly.

Teacher Education Programs

The key elements of the teacher education programs include curriculum, instruction, evaluation, qualified trainers and motivated trainees, and supportive administrators. Teacher education programs for both elementary and secondary English teachers in Korea have been criticized in the literature (Lee, 2000; Pae, 1997, 2002; Park, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2004). The major problems can be summarized as follows:

First, there is a lack of professional teacher educators. Teacher trainers or instructors are invited to teach for the teacher education programs through a varied pool: university professors, elementary and secondary school teachers, native English-speakers, supervisors of boards of education, TV personnel, and some other guest speakers. The selection criteria, however, are not consistent and systematic. Teacher education should be recognized as a specialized area that requires professional knowledge and skills. Not all the university professors or native English-speaking teachers can train teachers effectively. It is more than necessary to develop and implement a proper and efficient system for screening, monitoring, and re-training for teacher educators.

Second, improving teachers' English proficiency is one of the major purposes of the teacher training programs. Class size is often too big for an effective communicative class and the level of the trainees is mixed. Classes should be grouped depending on the nature and objectives of the courses. Teacher trainees need to be placed in the language skill-based classes depending on their proficiency level. As more classes in the training programs are taught in English, the proper placement is crucial. When large classes are inevitable, the instructors should be informed of this in advance and asked to use some effective strategies for teaching large classes.

Third, evaluation methods and criteria vary depending on the programs, with some common core elements: attendance, a comprehensive written test score, oral test score, and micro-teaching skill. However, regardless of the level of their performance and achievement in the program, they get a certificate of completion with a passing grade, if only they meet the minimum requirement of attendance. This brings out some negative effects on the trainees' attitude and motivation. It is suggested that the level of

proficiency needed for various skill domains should be identified and reinforced to achieve as a program fulfillment requirement. Appropriate assessments also need to be developed.

Fourth, there is no quality control or standardized curriculum, evaluation, and implementation of the teacher education programs. The teacher education programs are organized by regional boards of education and some university-affiliated teacher education institutes in association with the regional boards of education. The accessibility and capacity of educational resources and teaching body that these institutions have vary, which results in the difference in the quality of the programs. Now that the quality of the teachers and their teaching can be critical for the students' learning, communication and educational exchanges should be made among these regional program organizers and the educational budget should be allocated more efficiently so as to fill the gap among the programs throughout the country.

Native Speaker Myths

The public faith in native English speakers or English-speaking (NES) teachers in Korea has grown so strong that they do not seem to go away. The lack of proficient Korean teachers of English, disbelief and dissatisfaction of English education, and the aspiration of English language authenticity and cultural representation which have not been available for the majority Korean learners of English jointly serve as the driving forces to bring in a large number of NES teachers. Recently, Ministry of Education (MOE), Seoul City Government and other regional governments competitively broke the news out: 2,900 NES teachers will be hired and all the middle schools throughout the country will have one of them by 2010 (Dong-A Daily, Jan. 12, 2006); NES teachers are to be teaching in all the elementary and secondary schools in Seoul by 2009 (Hankook Daily, Mar. 27, 2005); NES teachers are now teaching in elementary and secondary schools in Sooncheon (Gyeonghyang Daily, Apr. 12, 2005). However, there is no rationale provided concerning why this has to be done but only a strong assumption that this is a 'good

gospel' to quench the people's thirst of learning English. They are political agendas rather than educational decisions supported by ELT or SLA theories and practices. With many questions and concerns unanswered, more and more native English speakers are being hired as classroom teachers and teacher trainers.

The major concerns with bringing in NES teachers include the following: First, the concepts of NES teachers implied by the qualifications stated in the job ads are very biased, uneducational, and most of all, mismatched with their job description. The one posted by English Program in Korea (EPIC) (<http://epik.knue.ac.kr>), an MOE sponsored English teacher recruiting program, for instance, specifies their duties and responsibilities to serve as English teacher trainer, classroom teacher and teacher assistant. However, the qualifications include being a citizen of one of the designated six English speaking countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, The United Kingdom, or the United States of America,³ so-called 'inner circle' group (Kachru, 1997), minimum Bachelor's degree in any area, a good command of the English language, and the ability and willingness to adapt to Korean culture and living. The very core elements of English teacher are disregarded: ELT expertise and experience, not even an interest in ELT! This results are from the lack of understanding of teaching English as a professional area and a wrong idea of "any English speaker can teach English" deep-rooted in Korean people including educational policy-makers and administrators.

Second, bringing the NES teachers with the qualifications mentioned above into the classrooms can marginalize both them and their Korean

³ It also says, "Applicants of Korean heritage or with non-English backgrounds - either a citizen or a legal resident of one of the designated six English speaking countries - must have studied from the junior high school level (7th grade) and resided for at least 10 years in one of the designated six English speaking countries." It is an obvious discrimination against those who can be equally qualified otherwise, based on a dangerously naive or blunt concept of what a [native] English teacher should be like, which does not accord to the global understandings of 'English speaker,' drawn from the 'World Englishes' perspectives.

counterparts. It becomes worse when there is no adequate orientation or training for both NES teachers and Korean teachers of English who are supposed to work together: Korean teachers of English are so overwhelmed by working with someone whose English proficiency and English cultural representation are superior to their own that they end up with handing all the rights and responsibilities over to their NES co-teacher or even to their NES teaching assistant. On the other hand, NES teachers who do not have proper training or experiences of teaching English in Korean classroom context are more often than not perceived by students as ‘entertainers or playmates’ rather than teachers. They are also asked to teach things that are not related to the regular curriculum and evaluation, which result in not being taken seriously. The students lose their illusion soon that they initially have on their foreign teachers and they do not seek for meaningful learning from them any more. Choi (2001) reassured that investing in recruiting well-qualified NES teachers is the best way of solving these problems. Better yet, as Nunan (2003) suggested, in the long run, the investment should be made on the local teachers to train them to be proficient and confident teaching professionals.

Third, hiring ‘inner circle group only’ reinforces the wrong concept of “English speakers” that the Korean learners have. This is a critical point as the Korean nation is pursuing international competitiveness and global leadership, which require an ability to cooperate and coordinate with a diverse group of people in the world, including not only those in the inner circle but also, possibly more importantly, those in what Kachru (1997) has labeled as the outer circle and expanding circle. A single norm for standard English no longer exists, particularly at a global level (Higgins, 2003) and an interest is increasing in the ownership of English and membership as NES in these two circles. What we need to be equipped in order to properly and efficiently play our role in the global world is not only the English language proficiency but also international understanding and cultural sensitivity. The latter refers to changing perception, attitudes, and values of certain groups of people and their cultures, which can be achieved only through well-thought out, planned and implemented language and culture courses and hopefully,

with some meaningful life experience. The English-speaking culture presented and represented by the teachers from the inner circle group only will restrict the scope and dimension of Korean learners' understanding of English language and culture and more seriously, provides them with the 'hidden agenda' that the untold and unheard culture of other groups are not important, second-class, and not worthy of recognition or appreciation.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Currently, governments and ministries of education are framing policies and implementing practices in the language area without adequately considering the implications of such policies and practices on the lives of the teachers and students they affect (Szulc-Kurpaska, 1996, cited in Nunan, 2003). Unfortunately, Korea is not an exception as clearly seen above. The major high-stakes policies such as implementing elementary English education in 1997, lowering the initial level to grade 1 as of 2008, recruiting thousands of NES teachers by 2010, to name a few, have been made and pushed without a necessary and sufficient groundwork. It is high time that TEFL profession and professionals play a pivotal role to make these rough and crooked paths of English education smooth and straight. In order to do so, the following are strongly suggested:

First, the Korean ELT goals and objectives should be revisited in order to help our learners to efficiently cope with the issues and agendas brought up from the global perspectives of English and English speakers. The current inner circle-centered English language and culture education will only handicap the Korean learners of English in the global society. More diverse and multicultural representations should be incorporated into the curriculum.

Second, we as TEFL professionals should make ourselves recognized as key people in making ELT-related policies and bringing about meaningful changes and differences in the lives of Korean learners of English with the support from the government and others, not the other way around. TEFL

professionals and the organizations need to be more aggressive and outreaching in order to empower our teachers, students, and our profession inside and outside of the classroom. Our professional expertise and experiences need to be seen and heard over those of 'false prophets' through a diverse communication channels, dispelling the folk belief and leading the Korean public to the right direction.

Third, teacher education programs should be developed and implemented in ways that both NES and Korean teachers are adequately trained in language teaching methodology appropriate to a range of learner ages and stages, that the teachers' own language skills are significantly enhanced, that classroom realities meet curricular rhetoric (Nunan, 2003). NES teachers are not a 'miracle cure' for all the wounds we have in TEFL. Without proper qualifications and efficient teacher education, they only make them worse. More researches need to be conducted on how to teach teachers and teachers as learners, in order to develop more efficient and practical teacher education curriculum and instructional methodology.

Lastly and most importantly, TEFL professionals should be firm and strong in terms of their sense of identity, commitment, knowledge and skills. The nature and the scope of challenges we face every day are changing constantly and rapidly. We have to keep abreast of the new knowledge and information based on which we can develop our own strategies to handle them, ensuring that the roads ahead are to be a safe and efficient way to our destination. After all, a continuous professional development is our right and responsibility to be who a true TEFL professional is and should be.

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