Trends, directions and challenges in SL teacher education and research

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Landscapes of language SL teacher education

- Global, cultural, social, political and economic development – and the role of language(s) within such developments

- Globalisation of English

- Implications of globalised English for relationships with other languages

Two major forces impacting language teacher education

External pressure – globalisation, international trade/communication leading to:

- Changing educational policies and curricula
- Centralised control over education
- Demands for teacher standards and accountability

Two major forces impacting language teacher education

Internal pressure - research, theoretical developments leading to:

- Changing professional knowledge
- Increasing professionalisation
- Deepening of knowledge base for language learning and teaching

The field of language teacher education

- Relatively new field (since mid-20th c.) drawing on:

  - Early training courses for various methods (e.g. audiolingualism) (1960s-1970s)

  - Development of field of applied linguistics (from c.1960s)

  - Research in second language acquisition (from c.1970s)

  - Developments in curriculum design and methodology (c.1970s-1980s)

  - Research on pedagogical and professional knowledge and cognition (from early 1990s)

What are the major areas of change since the 1990s?

- **Growth in professional development concepts and opportunities:**
    - Teacher training → Teacher development
    - Teacher as learner (socialisation of professional thinking)
    - Teacher as active agent in his/her own development
    - Teacher as reflective practitioner

Major areas of change

Growth in professional development concepts and opportunities:

The era is passing when it was assumed that a person equipped with a university degree or a teaching certificate or diploma, was equipped for lifelong service as a teacher. (Everard & Morris, 1996, p. 78)

Major areas of change

- **Professionalisation of language teaching**
  - Career of educational specialisation
  - Requirements for specialised bodies knowledge and training
  - Accountability - accreditation, standards, competencies, tests of language proficiency
  - Refinement of professional experiences and informed application of professional knowledge and practices

Major areas of change

Professionalisation of language teaching:

…a professional is a trained and qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct in their practice…in discussions on teacher education, professionalism issues are often addressed through questions such as *What should teachers know?* and *How should teachers go about their business?* (Leung, 2009, p. 49)

Major areas of change

- **Development of knowledge-base for teaching:**
  - knowledge *about* (content knowledge)
  - knowledge *how* (pedagogical and practical knowledge)
  - explicit/implicit knowledge → reflective teaching

Major areas of change

Development of knowledge-base for teaching

A knowledge base is, in essence, a professional self-definition. It reflects a widely accepted conception of what people need to know and are able to do to carry out the work of a particular profession…*i) what teachers need to know; ii) how L2 teachers should teach*; iii) *how L2 teachers learn to teach*. (Johnson, 2009, p. 21)

Major areas of change

Interest in nature of teacher-learning:

- Traditionally viewed as equipping teachers for 'effective delivery' (cf. teacher resistance)

- More recently viewed as ongoing, socially situated, cognitively and socially developmental→

- Co-construction of new (practitioner) knowledge

- Theorisation of teacher knowledge

Major areas of change

Interest in nature of teacher-learning:

Learning to teach is an ongoing developmental process. There is no "terminal competence" for teachers…There is also a discernable developmental trajectory. Novice teachers and experienced teachers need different things. (Graves, 2009, p. 118).

Major areas of change

- **Recognition of role of context of TE:**
  - Socio-cultural perspectives on experience and practice
  - Development within 'communities of practice'
  - Context seen as shaping learning and vice versa
  - Context seen as providing "affordances" for learning for teachers at different career stages
  - Recognition of cultural and linguistic complexity of global multicultural contexts

Major areas of change

- ■ **Recognition of role of context of TE:**

  [SLTE] content will need to provide a broad knowledge base that is rooted in the sociology, politics and cultural studies of English as a world language, which will help student-teachers to develop critical awareness of the discourses that pervade dominant practices and teaching materials [in their own contexts]. (Franson & Holliday, 2009, p, 43)

Major areas of change

- **Recognition of role of teacher cognition:**

  - Influence of teacher beliefs and thinking in mediating professional development and practice
  - Role of cognition in development of "personal practical theories"
  - Teaching as personal and dynamic socio-cogitive problem-solving

Major areas of change

Interest in teacher cognition research:

A key factor in the growth of teacher cognition research has been the realization that we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do.

Similarly in teacher education, we cannot make adequate sense of teachers' experiences of learning to teach without examining the unobservable mental dimensions of this learning process. (Borg, 2009, p. 163)

Major areas of change

- **Focus on teacher identity from a sociocultural and educationally situated perspective:**
  - Role, knowledge, skills of the NNST and what it means to be a NNST
  - Mediation of personal (auto)biographical journeys on teacher identity
  - Influence of gender/sexual preference
  - Impact of working conditions, school culture on teacher identity development

Major areas of change

- **Development of critical TE perspectives:**

  Given that critical practice is situated, response, and contextual, it is clear that the pursuit of a one-size fits all model is inadequate… This then, is the promise a critical approach holds: to contribute to the shaping of a social worlds in which all people regardless of language, ethnicity, color, or class, have equal voices, access, and possibilities.

  (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 37)

Major areas of change

Focus on teacher identity:

The nature of identity means that it is continuously co-constructed in situ, using many resources including personal biography, interactional skills, knowledge, attitudes and social capital…the negotiation of teachers' professional identities is also powerfully influenced by contextual factors outside of the teachers themselves… (Miller, 2009, p. 175)

Major areas of change

- **Development of critical TE perspectives:**
  - Influence of critical theory/pedagogy
  - Concept of curriculum/teaching as not politically or morally neutral
  - Awareness of ideological forces of "hidden curriculum"
  - Classroom power relationships (what should role of teacher be? What is the status of the NST?)
  - Questions relating to nature of social activism of teacher, and socio political dimensions of L2 learning

Implications for teacher education

Rethinking of methodologies and strategies

- Move from knowledge transfer (teachers mastering and delivering bodies of knowledge)
- TE as socio-constructivist site of learning, creating conditions for transformation of new knowledge into practice
- TE as self-directed and enquiry-based within collaborative and dialogic situations

What new TE approaches are developing?

Expansion of methodologies and modalities

- Dialectic (esp.supervision) – "learning to talk/act as a professional", learning the discourses of teaching (Johnston, 2009, Hedgcock, 2009)
- Dialogic – conversation as medium for examining beliefs, knowledge and practice (Richards & Singh, 2009)
- Task-based – individual/ collaborative tasks to mediate content knowledge (Legutke & Shocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009)

What new TE approaches are developing?

Expansion of methodologies and modalities cont.

- Action-based – practitioner inquiry, action research, exploratory practice, classroom-based research (Burns, 2009, McKay, 2009)

- Reflective – personal and dialogue journal-writing, narrative, autobiography, focus groups (Burton, 2009)

Taking place through increasingly:

- Multiple modalities – face-to-face, blended learning, online learning, distance learning, blogs, moodles, chatrooms – developing international communities of TE practice (Reinders, 2009, Hall & Knox, 2009)

Challenges and future directions for TE research

Identifying principles for successful teaching approaches and methodologies that are contextually appropriate in a "post-methods" era

…issues for further exploration… i) whether TE curriculum is educating teachers to replicate practice or challenge and change it…ii) T. educators themselves must guard against becoming "servants of the system"…creation of teacher standards is a double edged sword… (Graves, 2009)

Challenges and future directions for TE research

Equipping novice and experienced practitioners to undertake research for inquiry-based teaching:

L2 teacher educators need to emphasise throughout the teacher education program that the cornerstone of effective teaching is carefully designed research projects that seek to answer some of the many questions that need to be addressed in L2 teaching and learning. (McKay, 2009, p. 286)

Challenges and future directions for TE research

Equipping novice and experienced practitioners with greater language proficiency and knowledge about language (KAL):

For L2 teachers to acquire KAL which they can use for teaching, SLTE courses need to stop focusing on academic practices, such as reading studies and discussing theories. Instead [they] need to provide learning experiences in which (a) L2 teachers use (or develop) KAL and local knowledge to engage in teaching-like tasks, (b)… link and abstract from the knowledge acquired… and (c)…learn to design and carry out deliberate practice activities…Such a change or focus will be difficult for academics working in SLTE because of *the curse of knowledge*, the tendency for humans to assume that the knowledge they have is the most relevant…regardless of [its] actual usefulness… (Bartels, 2009, 130)

Challenges and future directions for TE research

**Providing teachers with opportunities for quality supervision and mentoring:**

Potentially school-based mentoring has a unique and important contribution to make to language teacher learning, in particular to the development of noticing skills, professional thinking and learning from experience, as well as to menteers' integration of knowledge of various kinds. However, if its potential is to be realised, and its additional benefits accrued, attention must be paid to ensuring that the conditions in which mentoring occurs are as fully supportive as possible. (Malderez, 2009, p. 264)

And finally the thorny question of:

Clarifying the relationships between teacher professional education and student learning:

Probing the relationship between what teachers come to know through professional development and what, through their teaching, their students come to know and are able to do will be absolutely critical for the professional legitimacy of L2 teacher education in the future (Johnson, 2009, p. 26)

Sources for presentation

The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education

Edited by Anne Burns, Jack C. Richards
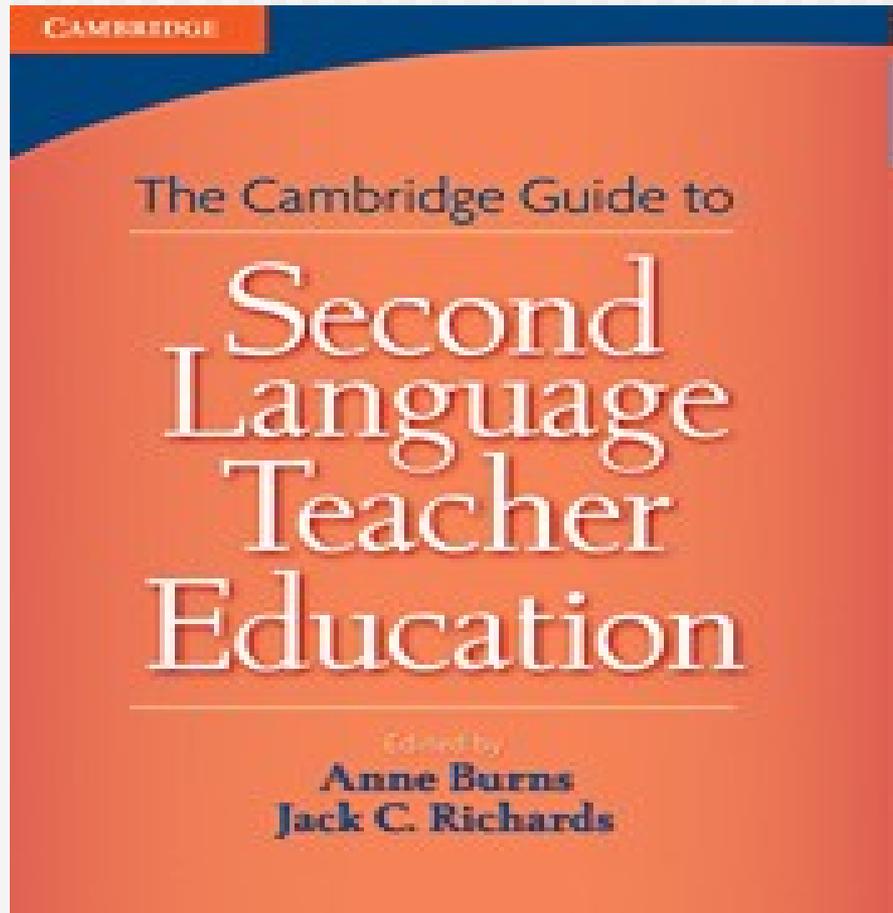
To download this presentation go to:

www.professoranneburns.com

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