



Renewing Vocation for English Language Teaching through Podcasting and Digital Storytelling

Paul Man-Man Sze

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

paulsze@cuhk.edu.hk

Introduction

The importance of teachers' continuing professional development has now been firmly established. Many education systems around the world now have mandatory requirements for in-service teachers to engage in professional development activities. Professional development is now a developed area in teacher education, both in terms of theory and research, and in practice [1][2].

A variety of activities have been proposed for teachers to engage in continuing professional development. These include action research [3], journal keeping [4], peer lesson observation, case studies, and other techniques. The subject matter of professional development typically includes teachers' beliefs, and teachers' pedagogical practice [5].

Teacher Motivation

While it is common sense that for professional development activities to really have an impact on teachers' professionalism and professional practice, teachers need to be sufficiently motivated about the work of teaching, not much attention has been paid to the dimension of teacher motivation in the practice of teacher development. Fortunately, the increasing level of teacher burnout globally has attracted the attention of writers and scholars in teacher education [6] [7]. As a result, more writers are now acknowledging the importance of renewing teachers' motivation and vocation in teaching [8][9]

Narrative Methods in Teacher Development

Another development in the field of teacher development in the last decade has been the increasing use of narrative methods in helping teachers renew their commitment to teaching, and helping them understand the situation they are in. These methods are used for two main purposes: (a) for stakeholders in education to gain a better understanding of the difficulties, dilemmas, and satisfaction that teachers experience, and (b) as pointed above, for teachers to sustain their passion in teaching. A considerable volume of work has now been done [10][11] Actual collections of narratives by TESOL educators and researchers have been published [12][13]. Most of the work, however, is in written format.

Using podcasting and digital storytelling for renewing teacher vocation

ICT has huge potential in facilitating narrative activities in teacher development. While traditional narrative work is mainly done in writing, ICT offers alternative modes of expression. Also, more and more teachers are becoming technology-savvy today. They are more and more adept in producing narratives in audio and video form. Audio and video files thus created constitute a record which teachers can keep for themselves, or show to their colleagues or even students. Furthermore, audio and video sharing sites are now easily accessible. Podcasts are series of audio (sometimes video) episodes. Their advantages are that new episodes can easily be added to the podcast, and listeners can easily follow the podcast for new episodes either by revisiting the link from time to time, or by subscribing to the podcast through a podcast feed reader such as iTunes. Digital storytelling involves producing a short story in video format, using still images and the storyteller's vocal narration. The visual element adds to the impact of the narrative. Because digital stories typically use still images only (as opposed to video clips), they are relatively simple to produce. Also, free software such as Photo Story Three is user-friendly enough that even elementary school students can now easily produce simple digital stories.

Conclusion

In this presentation, I will outline the work that I have attempted so far in employing podcasting and digital storytelling in renewing teacher motivation and vocation in teaching English as a foreign language. I will be showing samples of stories produced by teachers. I believe that there is scope for the wider adoption of these technologies in organising professional development activities that address the dimension of teacher motivation.

References

- [1] Bailey, K.M., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (2001). Pursuing Professional Development: The Self as Source. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- [2] Freeman, D., & Richards, J.C. (1996)(Eds.). Teacher Learning in Language Teaching. New York : Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Burns, A. (2010). Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching : A Guide for Practitioners. New York : Routledge.
- [4] Stevens, D.D., & Cooper, J.E. (2009). Journal Keeping : How to Use Reflective Writing for Effective Learning, Teaching, Professional Insight, and Positive Change. Sterling, Va. : Stylus Pub.
- [5] Richards, J.C., & Lockhart, C. (1994). Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms. New York : Cambridge University Press



- [6] Chang, M. L. (2009). An Appraisal Perspective of Teacher Burnout: Examining the Emotional Work of Teachers. *Educational Psychology Review* 21(3): 193-218.
- [7] Pucella, T. J. (2011). The Impact of National Board Certification on Burnout Levels in Educators. *A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 84(2): 52-58.
- [8] Game, A. & Metcalfe, A. (2008). The Teacher's Vocation: Ontology of Response. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27(6): 461-473.
- [9] Winter, J. S. (2011). Sustaining Teacher Educators: Finding Professional Renewal through Vocation and Avocation. *SRATE Journal* 20(1): 27-32.
- [10] Johnson, K.E. & Golombek, P.R. (2002). *Teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Bell, J.S. (2011). Reporting and Publishing Narrative Inquiry in TESOL: Challenges and Rewards. *TESOL Quarterly*: 45(3),575-584.
- [12] Crystal, D. (2009). *Just a Phrase I'm Going Through: My Life in Language*. London: Routledge.
- [13] Casanave, C.P., & Sosa, M. (2007). *Respite for Teachers: Reflection and Renewal in the Teaching Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.