**Research Plan**

**Title: Examining the Characteristics of Effective Language-Teacher Educators in the Global Era**

Name

**Introduction**

As English has spread amongst the globe, it has become seen as a vital tool for countries who wish to participate in the global economy (Richards, 2008). The fostering of English abilities within EFL contexts opens up a wealth of information and knowledge that can contribute to both a country’s social and economic development. This has led to an increasing demand worldwide for competent teachers of the language and therefore more effective approaches to language teachers’ preparation and professional development.

Historically, teacher education has been built around the premise that knowledge about teaching and learning can be transmitted to teachers through various forms of input. Most commonly, this input has come in the forms of theoretical readings, lectures, and workshops which often are removed from actual classroom contexts (Johnson & Freeman, 2001). As Richards (2008, p. 160-162) states, “Good teaching was seen as the mastery of a set of skills or competencies… An unquestioned assumption was that such knowledge informs teachers’ classroom practices.” This has lead to what Ball (2000, p. 242) refers to as a “… persistent divide between subject matter and pedagogy.” This sort of practice runs on the notion that teachers can be “front-loaded” (Freeman, 1993) and be equipped at the beginning of their careers for their whole teaching lives. However, front-loading teachers has resulted in teachers having a great deal of subject knowledge of the field but not much useable knowledge of practical classroom skills (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In other words, under this model, teachers often fail to apply what they have learned in their actual classrooms due to difficulties of translating their knowledge into practice (Bartels, 2005). Additionally, this model does not account for contextual factors, constraints, or intrapersonal factors such as teachers’ backgrounds and identities that can also lead to a failure to apply what has been learned.

It is now widely understood that the process of teaching is embedded in a web of social constructs. Usable knowledge in teaching requires knowledge about oneself as a teacher, the content to be taught, the students, classroom dynamics and the context in which teachers work (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Johnson, 1999; Telles, 2000). As Johnson and Freeman (2001) point out, “…if teacher learning and teaching are understood to grow out of participation in the social practices in classrooms, then what teachers know and how they use that knowledge in classrooms becomes highly interpretative and contingent on knowledge of self, setting, students, curriculum, and community.” (p.57). A socially-situated view of teacher learning demands that teacher education reshape the paradigms of teachers and molds practices to work effectively within their teaching contexts (Wenger, 1998; Chaiklin & Lave, 1996). On this basis Freeman & Johnson (1998) contend that language teacher education must build its foundations based on research that “is grounded in the activity of teaching itself, which centers on who does the work, where and how it is done.” (Johnson & Freeman, 2001, p.57)

The growing demand for language teacher education courses as a consequence of the spread of English worldwide has with it created a new demand for research in this area to understand effective approaches, methods and techniques to teacher education in the global era. As the main focus in teacher education has been on responding more sensitively to the working contexts of teachers in training (Bax, 1997), it is extremely important for the training to be ‘context-sensitive’ (Bax, 1995a, 1995b). Thus, a very important area of research lies in examining teacher training in foreign language teacher education teaching contexts. As Kumaravadivelu (2012) states,

*“If there is a need for a comprehensive framework for teacher preparation in the field of general education, which has witnessed substantial exploration and expansion in the last fifty years, then, clearly, the need for such a framework in the relatively nascent field of second and foreign language (L2) teacher education is even greater.”(p.2)*

In the past 20 years exploration has begun in topics such as: teacher research (Freeman, 1998), teacher cognition (Borg, 2006), teacher reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Farrell, 1999) and teacher identity (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Tsui, 2007) which have contributed greatly to the understanding of the complex makeup of teachers and their development. However, very little research has been conducted with a specific focus on teacher-educators and the foundational qualities that make up a successful and effective teacher-educator.

In the current state of teacher education globally, university language-teacher training programs are often taught by academics and researchers who often lack practical classroom skills. In EFL contexts, many teacher training programs prefer to have native-speakers as trainers as opposed to non-native even if their qualifications are lower. But are these people really the most effective and successful teacher educators? This is something that requires in-depth exploration and a critical analysis of the current paradigm of teacher-education. Kumaravadivelu’s (2012) modular system of teacher development includes aspects of Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing and Seeing (KARDS) and provides insights into various aspects of teacher education that a successful and effective teacher-educator may need to be versed in. Through my research I aim to explore teacher-educators from multiple perspectives in order to uncover and contribute to the detailed understanding of the characteristics of a successful and effective EFL teacher-educator in this global era.

**Research Questions and Aims**

The aim of my research is to investigate and suggest foundational qualities needed for successful and effective teacher-educators in this global era with a specific focus on teacher-educators in EFL contexts. To limit the scope of this study, it will specifically examine EFL teacher-educators involved in preparing teachers of learners in middle school and up in order avoid the complexity of including educators of the teachers of young learners.

The general overarching research question that I want to investigate is as follows:

1) What are core competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) are required for teacher-educators in the South Korean setting to be successful and effective in preparing Korean English teacher-learners for their roles and duties in a public-school setting in the country?

**Empirical Research Methods**

**Participants**

The participants in this study will consist of two different target groups that can provide different viewpoints of the issue which can later be cross-analyzed during data analysis. The first group will consist of in-service middle and high school teachers with a target of 50 survey participants and 15 focus group participants broken into 5 groups. The rationale behind choosing to examine in-service teachers is that they will be able to provide a contextually knowledgeable and experienced view of what the characteristics of a successful and effective teacher educator is.

The second group will consist of teacher-educators including only participants who have had firsthand experience in educating teachers and a minimum of 1 year of teacher training experience in order to elicit experienced insights. The target sample for group 2 will mirror group 1 with 50 survey participants and 15 focus group participants broken into 5 groups. This group of participants may include academics, researchers, in-service teacher trainers, and CELTA & DELTA instructors amongst others. The rationale behind choosing to examine teacher-educators is, because they have worked closely with teachers they may be able to provide information as to what a successful and effective teacher-educator can and should help teacher-learners with.

By collecting data from various perspectives, it will help me to remain objective in the process and simply report the emergent themes that surface within the coding of the data sets, rather than drawing from my own subjective experiences. Achieving empirical access to participant groups should not pose a problem as I currently have direct affiliations with hundreds of in-service language teachers around the world as well as various teacher-training centers and university language teacher training programs.

**Data collection procedures**

Initial data will be collected in the form of a survey which will be followed up with semi-structured interviews in focus groups to triangulate the data. The survey will contain a mixture of both fixed-alternative and open-ended questions that will maximize the range and detail of the information elicited (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). I will first run a pilot of the survey with a small sample group in order to check for reliability and validity of responses and ensure that the data elicited aligns with the research questions. Once primary data from the survey has been collected and analyzed, I will conduct semi-structured focus group interviews to further explore people’s perceptions which will help to expand the detail within the data set by searching for clarification and deeper understanding of emergent trends. In line with Berg (2001), I am choosing a semi-structured discussion set-up for focus groups in order to allow myself to go beyond the answers to prepared questions when necessary. I am specifically choosing a focus group format in order to allow participants to interact with one another which will result in more in-depth and insightful responses (Dörnyei, 2007).

**Data Analysis**

For the data analysis I will use qualitative coding software such as NVIVO, and follow comparative analysis procedures in line with (Charmaz, 2006; Tracy, 2013) where the codes and data are under constant review allowing for ongoing modifications during the coding process. I will begin the coding process with data immersion, where the entire breadth of the data will be explored through a detailed reading, analysis, re-reading, re-analysis process. Following data immersion, the elicited data will be analyzed and coded. Primary-cycle coding, outlined by Tracy (2013), will follow standard procedures where qualitative responses will be first closely examined and compared for similarities and differences. After searching for similarities and differences among the coded data, and the relationships between them, responses will then be grouped into general categories for further analysis (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Secondary cycle coding will begin to organize the data into emergent themes which will involve the critical examination of the preliminary codes while organizing, categorizing and synthesizing them into interpretive concepts. During this process, codes will be reorganized into second-level codes that will help to explain, theorize and synthesize emergent trends (Tracy, 2013).

In the findings, I will explain the emergent trends under thematic subheadings and in the discussion of the findings I plan to propose a set of essential teacher-educator qualities drawn from the data and literature that can contribute towards the creation of a foundational framework for successful and effective EFL teacher-educators in this global era.

Pending further studies in research methodology, the methods proposed above may be changed or adapted to procedures that may be more suitable.

**Reflections**

In my experiences both as a language teacher and as a teacher educator for both pre and in-service English teachers I have experienced teacher-education from the perspective of a student as well as from the perspective of a teacher-educator. Both of these perspectives have given me insight into the problems in language-teacher education and in teacher-educators themselves. In my experiences as an undergraduate student, my courses were fronted by academics and researchers who lectured about content related to linguistics leaving it up to the teacher-learners to apply this knowledge to classroom situations which we had not yet experienced. This proved to be a very difficult task as we did not have the background knowledge of the classroom and/or language teaching itself to cognitively apply what we were learning.

After gaining years of experience and reflecting back, I feel that these types of programs, which tend to be saturating language-teacher education, can and should be greatly improved not just in the curriculum, but also in who is doing the teaching. We now know that academics and language-teaching are sometimes divorced when it comes to classroom effectiveness and success, as great academics and researcher can conduct extremely poor language lessons and non-academics conduct brilliant lessons. In other words, great teachers can perform well without being able to explain it while others can explain it without being able to successfully execute what they are explaining. The same can be said for native and non-native teacher-educators which is explained in the following paragraph.

Being a teacher-educator for 8 years and the head teacher-educator at an in-service government supported language teacher training center in South Korea I saw a completely different side to the problem of teacher-education. In the case of this training center, I experienced many teacher-educators being hired by Korean administration with various qualifications many of whom I personally believed were not qualified for a teacher-educator position. The only thing that these people had in common was that they were native speakers of the language. I saw a great deal of these people run into difficulties as they tended to lack understanding and sympathy with the context and contextual constraints of teacher-learners. They tended to take a very homeland approach to teacher-training supplying teacher-educators with context inappropriate material such as highly kinesthetic activities, communicative approaches to teaching and English-only policies. They tended to take a one size fit all approach to training that failed to take into consideration the independent context of the learners. If teacher-education curriculum has a design-context mismatch, trainees tend to suffer from what Holliday (1992) refers to as ‘tissue rejection’, where content is rejected simply because there is little connection to trainees’ actual setting and this is what happened many times at this institute. Most of the time, the teacher-educators placed the blame on the teacher-learners stating that they were too lazy or stubborn to implement what they were being taught rather than accepting that what they were teaching did not fit the reality of what the teacher learners can or will do.

Through these experiences and the substantial literature challenging the current paradigm of teacher-education in the field, I believe it is now essential to investigate the characteristics of successful and effective EFL teacher-educators in order to be able to move forward with greater awareness and context-sensitivity.

As previously discussed, in order to avoid my own subjective interpretation of the situation, data will be collected from various perspectives providing enough breadth to discuss the findings as objectively as possible. Although it may be impossible to completely escape imposing my own views into the study, the multiple viewpoints collected will allow emergent themes to be at the forefront of the study.

It may be difficult to get enough breadth in the participants to deem the study valid and reliable in various EFL contexts. Upon initial data collection, if I am unable to get enough respondents in various EFL contexts, I may limit the scope of my study to Southeast Asia as I am currently residing in Korea and this is the most accessible region for data collection.

Additionally, it also may be difficult to define the terms successful and effective as these terms are relatively subjective and may elicit a wide range of responses. Since this research is exploratory in nature, the definitions of these terms will come out of interpretation of the collected data.

**Conclusion**

With the spread of English increasing the diversity of contexts where English is now being taught language teaching and learning is much more diverse than ever before. It is essential for English-teacher educators to keep up with the changing face of English education in order to adequately and successfully prepare teachers. However, little research to date has examined what constitutes a good EFL language teacher-educator. What do they need to know? What skills do they need to possess? All in all, what are the qualities of a successful and effective EFL English-teacher educator in this global era? By examining the perspectives of in-service teachers, cross-analyzing their thoughts with those with experience in educating teachers and taking into consideration current literature on the issue, this research will make positive contributions to language-teaching literature by shedding light on key teacher-educator qualities that should be considered in future of L2-teacher education.

**Research Timetable**

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| **Time** | **Description** |
| **March 2015 – March 2016** | Research training/ re-evaluation of research methods proposed/ breadth readings in background literature |
| **March 2016 – June 2016** | Create and conduct survey for stage 1/ begin analysis of survey data |
| **June 2016 – Sept. 2016** | Conduct focus groups and continue data analysis and coding of the complete data set |
| **Sept. 2016 – Dec. 2016** | Write stage 1 paper |
| **Jan. 2017- March 2017** | Conduct stage 2 interviews and begin teacher-educator observations |
| **March 2017 – June 2017** | Continue observations and conduct teacher-learner feedback survey |
| **June 2017 – Sept. 2017** | Data analysis and coding/ Begin writing stage 2 paper |
| **Sept.2017 – Dec. 2017** | Continue writing stage 2 paper |
| **Jan. 2018- March 2018** | Collect background literature I will need to draw on and begin to compile bibliography of sources |
| **March 2018 – June 2018** | Write stage 3 literature review |
| **June 2018 – Sept. 2018** | Write discussion and implications |
| **Sept. 2018 – Dec. 2018** | Finalize paper and prepare for Viva Voce |

Within this research timetable there should also be some buffer time allotted that will allow for unfinished work or unexpected events which may delay the above work. This buffer time may be included between each major stage of studies for example after research training, after completion of stage 1 research, after completion of stage 2 research and prior to viva voce.

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