

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-52998-3 - A Practicum in TESOL: Professional Development through Teaching Practice

Graham Crookes

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University of Hawai'i at Manoa



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To my parents, Brian and Vicki;
my wife Hildre;
and to Alison, Paul, and Ellen.

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Series Editor's Preface

While the practicum is considered a core course in most TESOL teacher education programs, compared to many other areas of professional theory and activity it has received relatively little serious study, in terms of conceptual orientation, content, or practice. Hence, as the author of this book states, it remains undertheorized and under-researched. What little research it has received has primarily been descriptive in nature.

This book seeks to do several things. First, it describes how a course in teaching practice can be organized. Based on extensive experience in teaching the practicum course in a MATESOL program, Dr. Crookes explores the issues involved and describes how many of the practical questions that arise can be addressed. Simplistic answers are avoided, however, in favor of a further probing of the questions and an introduction to a rich knowledge base in educational theory and philosophy as a source for insight and clarification. A parallel agenda of the book is to open up the whole nature of teacher development in language teaching and evaluate the assumptions, values, and practices on which it is constituted. The perspective presented as this process of reflective analysis takes place can be described as one grounded in critical pedagogy. Thus, throughout the book the author offers a critical questioning of commonly held assumptions and practices and leads us to further examine our ideas about many aspects of teaching, including its social, moral, and political dimensions. And lastly, Dr. Crookes seeks to present an approach to the practicum that is collaborative and that facilitates long-term teacher development and does not merely provide substance for a one-semester practicum experience.

This is not, then, simply another “how to” book of techniques. Although valuable insights are presented throughout concerning the basic issues involved in the organization of teaching practice, including relations with mentor teachers, lesson planning, observation, motivation, classroom management, and the role of teacher development groups, the development of teaching skill is viewed as a complex phenomenon involving many layers of learning. Beyond the level of practical learning are issues that involve the development of personal theories and teaching philosophies. The

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development of social and interactional skills and the recognition that teaching has a moral and political dimension are also involved. Dr. Crookes is hence concerned with exploring both the outer and inner worlds of teaching and teacher development, and in the process he invites us to revisit many of the working assumptions from which we operate in teacher education. His ability to draw on his extensive knowledge of the fields of educational psychology and the philosophy of education adds both breadth and depth to his narrative.

This book is therefore an important addition to the literature on teacher learning in language teaching and to our understanding of how the practicum course in TESOL can be conceptualized and taught. It will be a valuable source book for both teacher educators and classroom teachers. It offers a fresh and challenging perspective on the nature of the practicum, written from the unique perspective of a leading scholar and theoretician in the field of applied linguistics who is actively involved in both classroom teaching and teacher education. It is hence a welcome addition to the Cambridge Language Education Series.

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