Durham BALEAP PIM

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Teachers Managing Change from General English to EAP

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This presentation focused on my MA in-progress which relates to how experienced General English teachers manage the change to teaching EAP for the first time. Responses in one-to-one interviews so far have highlighted the following factors as allowing a successful change from one context to another:

The following is a summary of the powerpoint presentation which is based around quotations from respondents and in some cases support from the literature.

1. An ability to notice

   'if you care about what a student is trying to do and needs to do, then you notice things...'

   'I noticed differences in the quality of the presentations given by other teachers' students. I looked at them critically so I could analyse them and make sure my students achieved the same or better.'

2. A basis of self (as teacher)-efficacy

   'Not being too fearful of asking the questions you need answers to.' -Teachers having enough of a sense of self-efficacy to see all questions they have as being valid as opposed to worrying that a question may be too obvious or identify the teacher as a 'fraud'.

   'I was determined that no-one would find out' –feverishly reading up on EAP/ looking through materials for information and inspiration and having faith that they could do so.

   Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy 'are more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students.' (Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. 2001:1)
   Authors make reference to Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE): teachers belief in their own teaching capabilities which has a strong positive influence on student performance and on 'the amount of teacher change' possible. (ibid)

3. A commitment to professional development

'You've got to want to teach it as well as you can and be prepared to accept-I don't know anything so I'm going to try to learn as much as I can to be able to teach it as well as I can...'

'Can you make it better and how can you make it better-I'm always seeking ways to try to do that'

4. A willingness to take two steps back

Alexander, O (2012) *Exploring beliefs in teaching EAP at lower proficiency levels* Journal of EAP 11 99-111
'..teachers with considerable general CLT experience sometimes report feeling deskilled (Ding, Jones & King, 2004) when they first move to EAP, effectively reverting to pre-service status in relation to this specialist type of language teaching.'
Whilst I question whether teachers do reach a situation in this change where they are 'reverting to pre-service status', it appears that one factor in managing the change from General English to EAP relates to acknowledging that knowledge and skills may not be as 'expert' as they are within the GE context and so the teacher may need to 'take two steps back'.

'I just trusted in the course and what it was trying to deliver and I tried to fit into that I suppose.'

'You've got to be prepared to accept-I don't know anything so I'm going to try to learn as much as I can to be able to teach it as well as I can.'

'I approached teaching EAP with a certain sense of modesty because, you know, the skills people have acquired over years of teaching EAP need to be respected.'

5. Access to resources and support
Crucially here, being able to identify as well as access the resources and support you need as a teacher.

'I had <u>an observation </u>on the second day which was very positive so that helped a lot and in terms of what I was doing in the class, things seemed to be going well.'

'I <u>spoke to X </u>and found it very reassuring and encouraging'

'Some teachers could be a bit 'precious' about their knowledge but it was important to <u>have easy access to help from peers and colleagues'</u>

'I was busily reading EAP coursebooks to get ideas for my classes'

'I just thought: I'm going to make the effort to find out for myself.'

Some support for these ideas may be found in Hoban (2002) who describes a framework for teacher development or a 'Professional Learning System' which includes various optimal conditions including: 'a sense of community ..so that teachers trust each other to share experience' as well as 'a variety of knowledge sources.. to extend the experiences of the participants.' Hoban, G, (2002) *Teacher learning for educational change* OUP

In summary, it seems to me that a number of the factors outlined above are also apparent in the following description of Teacher A (who made a successful change) in Woods (1996). My annotations are in brackets and in bold.

This teacher described her change in teaching as a 'gradual progression' and Woods adds: 'implying that the central aspects of her approach and character were at no time threatened...' **(FE: links to a *basis in self-efficacy*)**

'It seemed that the initiation and the readiness for change was both internal and external. The internal element included both an interest in change and a conceptual readiness for change... **(FE: *Commitment to and desire to change*)** 'In addition, there seemed to a be a social motivation to change. The social system of 'teaching culture' of which the teacher was a part provided both models of and support for the changed state. It seemed for the change to take place, the characteristics of the new state had to be desirable, available, plentiful, and highlighted in her environment **(FE: *Access to resources*);** they had to be non-threatening to the central aspects she identified with; and they needed time to be absorbed' (**FE**: *this is the factor which is problematic with regard to early EAP experiences which tend to be PS).* Woods, D, (1996) *Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching* CUP(p.294)

Session Discussion Questions and Participant Responses

- What qualities do you look for when recruiting novice EAP tutors?

Cultural awareness and sensitivity

Confidence ('perfecting the art of the bluff')

Qualifications (both teaching certification and academic qualifications and <u>experience</u> (Do you need a Masters to teach a Masters?<u>)</u>

Adaptability and flexibility

Empathy (vs sympathy)-understanding sts needs, what's expected

Analytical skills-employing genre analysis to 'unpack' the subject/requirements

Ability to reflect

- What kind of course should they start on?

No responses provided

- What type of support should they receive?

EAP videos of tutors in action to dispel the fear of going into the unknown.

Peer support via mentor system.

Co-teaching with 1 other teacher being responsible for the class.
On-line pre-induction which allows time to reflect and may be convenient for those based abroad.

Add 'ideas for teachers and extra resources' for particular lessons (gleaned from teachers' feedback) in pack at start of the course.

- In your early EAP career, what type of support did you receive on what kind of courses?

EAP 'support' often just 'trial by fire'.

Thank you all so much for your participation in the discussion. The ideas for support for teachers making this change from GE to EAP and your ideas on the qualities required in a novice EAP teacher are stimulating and enlightening. Your contributions are much appreciated.

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