

NEW ZEALAND TESOL PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND KEY INDICATORS OF COMPETENCE

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This article presents the results of a recent two part survey commissioned by TESOLANZ (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Association of New Zealand). Part A of the survey was undertaken to define the membership of the Association in order to best meet future teaching and learning demands. Part B of the survey sought to establish a set of teacher competencies in the area of TESOL. Teacher competencies are the technical skills and professional capabilities that a teacher needs to bring to a position in order to fulfil its functions completely (Aitken, 1998).

PART A: Profile of the TESOL profession

Surveys of the membership in particular professions are an important part of strategic planning for the growth, development and maintenance of that profession. The assessment of where a profession stands at present in terms of its members' status becomes an essential part of its ability to meet the present and future needs of its clientele. Determination must be made whether the present membership have the ability, experience and continued training options to meet future demands. The teaching profession has recently undergone such an analysis. This analysis, begun in 1996, will continue in 1998 through a specific census of all those in the state school sector workforce (Sturrock, 1998).

The teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is an area which could only be partly analysed using the methods outlined above. Practitioners teach in a wide range of sectors from early childhood, to tertiary. Instructional venues can include home, community language schools, private language schools, refugee and migrant centres, and the whole range of educational institutions available. Nonetheless the need to define the TESOL profession has become more pressing as the demand for English language instruction increases in New Zealand. For instance, over 21,000 primary and secondary non-English speaking background (NESB) students from 56 different first language groups are currently receiving funding from an additional allocation of \$5.7 million from the Ministry of Education. These students will need continued assistance as they progress through tertiary education, into the workforce, and learn to cope with social and legal demands. An estimated 30,000 international full fee paying students were in New Zealand in 1997 (Rose, 1998). Quota refugees, new immigrants, and family members requiring tuition at home must be added to these figures. The steadily growing number of people of different ages and ethnic backgrounds requiring English language teaching is putting

pressure on existing educational institutions and teacher training programmes. It is clear that there is a shortage of qualified and experienced ESOL teachers to meet the range of learner needs.

A certain portion of teachers of English to speakers of other languages in New Zealand would have been included in the Ministry analysis of the teaching profession described above. However, it would appear that many in this specialised sector work outside the parameters of the state school sector workforce. To date, no information about this vital sector of the education profession has been gathered.

The need for information about ESOL teachers has developed as part of the push for professional standards. Part A of the survey, targetted the areas listed below in order to develop a profile of the ESOL profession in New Zealand. The TESOLANZ membership provided the survey sample.

- the sectors in which members work
- community languages speakers who are also ESOL teachers
- the range of qualifications held
- the length of experience of members
- the current professional support available to members
- language learning experience of members

Most, but not all of these are reported on in the following sections.

Developing the survey

In May, 1998 all members of TESOLANZ were sent a brochure, *Profile of the New Zealand TESOL profession*. Recipients were asked to respond to 13 items. Added to the areas above were: age, gender, present position, nature of position, and professional development avenues.

As most of the variables required in the survey were of an objective nature, e.g. age and gender, trialling of items in the survey was limited to the item in the survey which requested information about ESOL sectors in which members worked. It was felt that more information was needed in this area of the survey to ensure that the diversity of the profession was represented clearly in the choice of options offered.

The selected sector representatives were asked to complete a trial form of the ESOL Sector item. Representatives were requested to select one or more of the options below and were to add or delete from the list.

- Early Childhood
- Primary

- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Adult and Community Education
- Home Tutor Association/Migrant Issues
- Teacher Education/Advisory Services
- Other

TESOLANZ Branches were also asked to suggest a list of ESOL sectors. As a result of this consultation process, a number of additions were made. These were: Polytechnic, Private Language School, TOPS courses, employment-based education, and University Language Centre. Community Education and the Home Tutor Association were combined to represent one sector.

Results

ESOL Sectors

The survey was completed by 191 respondents, a response rate of just over 30%. Fourteen distinct sectors were identified. Many listed two areas of employment as shown by the total number of responses, 255. This indicates that 33.5% of members either work in more than one area, or that some of the sectors were not clearly defined and respondents felt they had to circle two choices. The table below shows the percentage of members in 8 of the most frequently represented sectors.

Sectors	Percentage of respondents
Secondary	19.2
Polytechnic	18.8
Tertiary	11.7
Community Education	10.5
Teacher Education	10.1
Private Language School	8.2
Primary	5.8
University Language Centre	5

Table 1: The eight most frequently represented sectors

Any sector represented by less than 5% of the respondents is not listed above. The largest bulk of the members teach in secondary schools, polytechnics or tertiary institutes.

Age

The majority of ESOL teachers surveyed are in the age range of 44-55 years old with a mean age of 47.3 years. In the general teaching profession, 35% of teachers are in the age group of 40-49 years, whereas this age group comprises 45.5% of the TESOL profession. Even though the TESOL survey was based on a small sample, there are a number of clear

implications from the sample. ESOL teachers appear to be older than the rest of the teaching population and there are fewer younger teachers involved in the profession. As noted in Sturrock (1998) there will be few experienced teachers coming through to replace the bulk of teachers approaching retirement. How can younger teachers be attracted to TESOL? What part can TESOLANZ play in this recruitment issue?

Gender

Of those surveyed, 87.4% of ESOL teachers were women and 12.6% were men. Historically the teaching profession has been predominantly female. The gender proportions of all teachers in New Zealand are as follows:

Tertiary: 45.9% female, 54.1% male

Secondary: 56.2% female, 43.8% male

Primary: 83.6% female, 16.4% male

The ESOL figures determined by the survey (irrespective of level) relate closely to the proportions shown in primary schools. 87% of instructors were women and 13% were men. Sanaoui (1997) reports similar figures from a study conducted in Ontario.

Qualifications

As in any profession, practitioners should be qualified. In the case of TESOL, students deserve the best possible instruction. The TESOLANZ philosophy of professional standards makes this clear as it emphasises that those in the field need specialised teacher education courses and that only qualified, experienced professionals have the skills to address issues relating to ESOL learners (White, 1997).

Members have achieved a wide range of qualifications. 91% of those surveyed had an ESOL qualification. The key qualifications and numbers achieving those were:

Postgraduate Diploma	88 members
Specialised certificate (RSA, Trinty)	44 members
Certificate (Polytechnic, COE)	28 members
MA	23 members
Home Tutor Training	3 members

Table 2: Numbers of members and qualifications received

Many of the above also held other academic or teaching qualifications (89%). In general academic terms, 75% of the respondents had obtained a university degree.

The profession is at least in a strong position regarding the percentage of members who have either a specialised ESOL qualification or a general teaching qualification, although it may be argued that the latter alone does not prepare teachers adequately.

Teaching experience

The profession has an experienced, well-qualified base of expertise. The survey shows that the average number of years ESOL experience was 9.6 years with a range of 1-30 years, while the average number of years of other teaching experience was 8.6 years with a range of 1-36 years. Future planning must involve maintaining this core while constantly securing the services of new and preferably younger teachers.

The survey did not establish how many ESOL teachers began teaching without first teaching other subjects. Perhaps subject teachers have moved into language teaching after a few years. These processes and developments in teaching careers are considerations for further studies. If the profession is to continue serving its clientele effectively then an understanding of career paths is needed.

Job nature

The employment status of respondents was divided into: Permanent, Contract, Casual and Other. One omission was part-time as a separate category and as an option in the Permanent category. Only 4% listed part-time as an option under Other whereas a further analysis of the data reveals that part-time was listed as part of the response to "Please give the title/details of your present position". The responses to this item also revealed that a number listed two or more positions of a different nature or ESOL sector which indicated the part-time nature of these options. As a result of this adjustment, part-time employment increases to 9% and those working in two or more positions grows to 10%.

The transitory nature of TESOL employment becomes apparent when the casual option of 10% is added to the above figure and the fact that a further 26% are on contract.

Job security is the overriding issue here. Given the revised analysis above, 55% of respondents are in part-time or contract positions and 45% are in full time permanent positions. The quality of teaching may be affected by a more piecemeal approach to educating English language learners. TESOL is subjected to economic priorities and the perceived status of the subject to a great extent especially in specific sectors and these factors may serve to undermine professional standards.

Employer support for professional development

Of the responses, 90% said that their employers provided assistance for professional development while 10% reported little or no support. Support was provided through seven key options with payment of conference and course fees and provision of time off being those most likely offered. Advanced qualification fees were paid for by some institutions while other employees were having to use their own time and finances to continue professional development within restricted budgets. Comments provided on the survey brochure indicated that universities generally offered the best level of support while secondary schools struggled to provide adequate support packages.

The Ontario survey (Sananoui, 1997) revealed that 98% of TESOL instructors were offered professional development activities by their employers. 72% indicated that they also participated in professional development programmes independently from their employers.

Perhaps a standardised development package should be specified for all TESOL sectors. This may encourage a firm commitment to the concept of professional development and in turn let employees know what to expect.

Summary and implications

The membership profile of NZ TESOL has established baseline data which will enable future decisions in terms of recruitment and retention, professional development, training and qualifications to be grounded in the distinct characteristics of the profession. There are many issues resulting from this analysis which should be dealt with by TESOLANZ, the Ministry, institutions and employers.

From the study, a picture of the ESOL professional in New Zealand emerges as someone who may:

- teach in a secondary school or polytechnic
- be female and 47 years old
- have ESOL qualifications
- have a BA or MA
- have general teaching qualifications
- have taught ESOL for 9.6 years, and in other sectors for 8.6 years
- have a part-time job
- obtain employer support through payment of conference fees, paid leave, papers paid for, payment of course fees

From this profile a number of issues arise.

- The number of primary teachers and early childhood teachers registered in the membership survey is small. Yet there are over 15,000 primary NESB students receiving ESOL resourcing and more beyond eligibility for funding who still need assistance being taught by teacher aides and trained teachers in primary schools (Lee, 1998). There are primary schools on *Assisting NESB students* contracts throughout the country emphasising the obvious needs of these schools to develop effective teaching and learning strategies. In primary schools in particular there are some teacher aides lacking teaching or ESOL qualifications working with NESB children. Clearly, the organisation must encourage increased membership from the sector which will continue to teach large numbers of NESB students.

- Three other sectors which seem under-represented in the membership survey are the Home Tutor Association, Community Education and Private Language School Tutors. These groups form an important part of the ESOL profession. What can TESOLANZ do to encourage increased membership and contact with these areas?
- The primary school sector and to a lesser extent the secondary sector has been supported by a recruitment drive for teachers since 1996, aimed mainly at the younger age group (Sturrock, 1998). Many sectors in TESOL exist outside these recruitment drives organised by the Ministry of Education and are subject to wider international economic, social and educational forces in terms of foreign fee-paying students, immigration, refugee quotas, etc. The lack of co-ordination or support by a government funded agency (although NZEIL is currently involved in the maintenance of standards regarding fee paying students) means that the TESOL profession in New Zealand has developed its own infrastructures and policies especially in those areas outside the state or tertiary sectors. Qualification programmes through universities, polytechnics and colleges of education have assisted in providing trained ESOL teachers but there is still a lack of knowledge about these recruitment and retention issues.

PART B: Core Competencies Profile

There are no easy answers to the question: "What makes a good ESOL teacher?" The teaching of English to speakers of other languages is a highly specialised field which is in the process of further definition and in establishing competency and professional standards for its members. Its members can teach in a diverse range of sectors covering learners from pre-school to mature students and in diverse situations from migrant education to specialised academic and industrial instruction. Two countries are well along in this process of establishing professional TESOL standards. In January 1993, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations began considering the development of TESOL teacher competency statements (Hogan, 1994) and presented a document for discussion at the national conference the following year. These core competency statements have now been finalised and published. Canadian TESL began its research in November 1994 resulting in an effort to encourage its branches in different states to adopt a unified approach to these issues (see Keevil-Harold, 1995). These initiatives offer models for other national TESOL organisations who are anxious to establish a set of competency statements and to further define the attributes of its practising members. They were used as models for this core competencies profile as well.

Developing the statements

This project began the task of selecting the key indicators of competence within the TESOL profession. Using Australian (Hogan, 1994; Commis, 1995) and Canadian (Keevil-Harold, 1995) procedures for establishing minimum competency standards, the project officer and

director put forward some examples of competency statements as the first step prior to consulting sector representatives and TESOLANZ branches. A minimal number of categories and statements included in each category was supplied in order to encourage effective consultation without being too directive or prescriptive.

Each sector representative was given a list of category headings and attributes to endorse, change or delete (see sample below).

- An ESOL teacher in New Zealand will be expected to understand:
1. The process of second language development
 2. Current TESOL methodological approaches (up to a total of five statements).
- An ESOL teacher in New Zealand can:
1. Use a language level appropriate to student's ability.
 2. Provide models of spoken and written language in context, followed by guided practice and opportunities for language use (continued for a total of 11 statements).
- An ESOL teacher in New Zealand can apply principles and techniques for the assessment of spoken and written English which use:
1. A range of second-language assessment techniques
 2. Appropriate documentation systems (only two statements were provided).

Branches were also asked to use brainstorming to develop key elements of competency.

Extensive responses were received from both sector representatives (Tertiary, Polytechnic, College of Education, Private Language Schools, Secondary schools) and eight branches. Based on the number and conceptual nature of these suggestions, the number of key categories increased to six and the number of statements from 18 to 54. Responses were analysed and classified as the basis for the core competency ranking exercise. The final format for membership response was a brochure *TESOLANZ Project: Core Competency Statements* posted out in April, 1998. Members were asked to respond to the inventory, rating each competency on a five point scale from 'of no importance' to 'very important'. Branches were urged to encourage members to complete the core competency exercise. All ten branches were represented by the 194 members who responded. This is a response rate of just over 30%.

Results

The *TESOLANZ Draft Philosophy of Professional Standards* (White, 1997) stated that teachers within the profession require particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience for the context in which they work. The support given to particular core competencies by

members reflects a similar emphasis, as shown by the list of items below with a mean rating of 4.97- 4.01.

Members stated through their choices that ESOL teachers needed the following.

knowledge of:

- factors affecting language learning
- broader principles of teaching
- the process of L2 development
- different learning styles
- TESOL methods
- phonological and structural features of English
- the principles behind materials development and selection
- the impact of L1 on language teaching
- the principles of TESOL course design and curriculum development

skills to:

- provide appropriate models of language in context
- accommodate varying levels and abilities
- use a language level appropriate to the student's ability
- provide constructive and sensitive feedback to facilitate learning
- use a variety of teaching strategies
- provide a balanced programme
- facilitate independent learning
- assess and use appropriate resources
- monitor learner progress
- carry out a needs analysis
- ensure assessment is valid and understandable by the student and other stakeholders
- select and use a range of TESOL methodologies
- develop suitable assessment tasks
- use both formal and informal methods of assessment
- select and apply a range of second language assessment techniques
- use a range of functions to enable students to participate in New Zealand society

attitudes which:

- mean behaving in a non-racist, non-sexist and professional manner
- create a classroom environment conducive to learning
- encourage teacher-student rapport
- ensure that students know what they are doing and why
- ensure contribution to professional development programmes when possible.

education and experience which includes:

- TESOL training
- Continuing Professional Development
- Qualifications in TESOL
- Learning another language

Appendix 1 presents all of the core competency statements and their ranking.

Conclusion

There is a need for TESOL professional associations to provide clear guidelines for academic and employment settings (England, 1998). The core competency statements discussed in this report will be of interest not only to TESOL professionals but also to signal that TESOL is a specialised profession which requires more than lay knowledge. It is vital that TESOLANZ assume this role of professional guidance.

Note

A longer version of this paper can be viewed at <http://www.tesolanz.org.nz/index.html>

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APPENDIX 1: Mean ratings of core competency statements

E2	provide models of language	4.97
C5	understand factors affecting language learning	4.86
D7	significance of non-racist, non-sexist behaviour	4.80
E9	able to accommodate varying levels and abilities	4.72
A1	should have TESOL training	4.71
E1	use a language level appropriate to student's ability	4.66
D1	significance of classroom environment/learning.	4.65
D3	significance of teacher/student rapport	4.65
F8	be able to provide constructive feedback	4.64
D6	significance of students knowing what they are doing	4.63
E5	use a variety of teaching strategies	4.60
E10	able to provide a balanced programme	4.57
B2	understand the broader principles of teaching	4.54
A7	should have ongoing Professional Development	4.52
E3	able to facilitate independent learning	4.51
E7	able to assess and use appropriate resources	4.49
D5	significance of monitoring learner progress	4.47
B1	understand process of L2 development	4.46
C4	understanding of different learning styles	4.46
E6	able to carry out a needs analysis	4.44
F9	able to ensure assessment is valid	4.42
E4	able to use a range of TESOL methodologies	4.41
A2	have qualifications in TESOL	4.40
F4	develop suitable assessment tasks	4.36
B3	understand TESOL methods	4.35
B4	understand phonological features of English	4.31
C3	understand multiculturalism	4.27
A8	understand sociocultural context	4.25
B5	understand principles of material development	4.23
F3	able to use both formal and informal assessment	4.19
C6	understand impact of L1 on language teaching	4.12
F1	able to apply a range of L2 assessment techniques	4.10
D9	significance of using a range of functions	4.09
D8	significance of contributing to PD programmes	4.06
A5	have experience in learning another language	4.04
B6	understand principles of TESOL course design	4.01

C2	understanding of biculturalism	3.98
A3	have experience in TESOL	3.97
E8	able to use appropriate technology	3.94
F6	able to apply techniques for evaluation	3.93
D4	significance of moderation	3.91
F7	able to assess competencies	3.83
C1	understanding of bilingualism	3.81
F10	able to develop learner profiles	3.78
D2	significance of classroom centred research	3.78
F2	able to follow and use documentation systems	3.72
C7	understanding of curricular issues	3.64
F11	able to use fixed criteria assessment	3.62
A6	have membership in a TESOL organisation	3.55
E11	able to carry out administrative responsibilities	3.51
C8	understanding of Govt policies which affect TESOL	3.49
B7	understand the Qualifications Framework	2.88
F5	able to assess to Qualifications Framework	2.83
A4	have experience in a community language	2.74