An Exploration of EFL Teachers' Awareness of the Sources of Pedagogical Knowledge in a Teacher Education Program

Una exploración del nivel de conciencia de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera respecto a las fuentes del conocimiento pedagógico en un programa de formación de docentes

Diego Fernando Macías*

Universidad Surcolombiana, Colombia

This project set out to investigate the extent to which the sources of English as a foreign language teachers' pedagogical knowledge are acknowledged and addressed in a teacher education program in a public university in Colombia. It involved the participation of teacher educators and novice teachers as well as the analysis of documents. This research followed a qualitative design with an interpretive approach to inquiry, and the data used were semi-structured interviews and official documents. The results indicate that while most of the teacher educators appeared to be aware of the many sources of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, novice teachers emphasized their initial teacher education and teaching experience as the only sources of their pedagogical knowledge.

Key words: Pedagogical knowledge, sources, teacher education, teaching experience.

Este proyecto buscó investigar hasta qué punto las diferentes fuentes de conocimiento pedagógico de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera son reconocidas y abordadas en un programa de formación inicial en una universidad pública en Colombia. El proyecto involucró la participación de formadores de docentes y docentes principiantes y el análisis de documentos. La investigación siguió un diseño cualitativo con un enfoque interpretativo y los datos utilizados fueron entrevistas semiestructuradas y documentos oficiales. Los resultados indican que mientras la mayoría de los formadores de docentes parecían ser conscientes de las muchas fuentes del conocimiento pedagógico de los docentes, los docentes principiantes enfatizaron su educación inicial como docentes y la experiencia docente como las únicas fuentes de su conocimiento pedagógico.

Palabras clave: conocimiento pedagógico, educación de docentes, experiencia docente, fuentes.

* E-mail: diego.macias@usco.edu.co

Introduction

As a postgraduate student, I was enrolled in a course concerning the education and development of language teachers. Some of the class discussions focused on what constitutes the knowledge base of language teachers; that is, the knowledge and skills needed for teachers to successfully teach the language. Most significantly, issues such as teachers' ways of knowing about the act of teaching came up during the sessions. These discussions made me realize that how and where language teachers learn to teach is an area worth looking into. It follows that my interest in this study was how English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers learn to teach and where their pedagogical knowledge comes from. The term pedagogical knowledge is defined by Shulman (1986b, 1987) as teachers' accumulated knowledge concerning the act of teaching that serves as the foundation for their classroom behavior and activities. Mullock (2006) similarly claims that teacher knowledge is sometimes referred to as pedagogical knowledge, which he defines as accumulated knowledge about the act of teaching, including the goals, procedures, and strategies that form the basis for what teachers do in the classroom. Thus, teacher knowledge or pedagogical knowledge is what ultimately informs teachers' decisions and actions in the classroom and is also evidenced in the materials and activities teachers use in the teaching process.

My own experience has led me to assume that recently qualified EFL teachers, at least in Colombia, appear to rely almost entirely on the pedagogical knowledge they receive in teacher education programs. Therefore, the methods, techniques, and teaching strategies that these teachers use in their classrooms are thought to come from the methods courses that they usually take in the teacher education program. This view, according to Johnson (2006), is possibly based on the traditional assumption that teachers learn about what to teach (content

knowledge) and how to teach (teaching skills) in their teacher education program; they observe and practice it in the teaching practicum, and develop expertise during the induction years of teaching.

In contrast, studies such as the one by Zeichner, Tabachnic, and Densmore (1987) have concluded that the theoretical and practical knowledge that student teachers acquire in initial teacher education programs have little influence on their subsequent professional practice, while others (Calderhead & Miller, 1986; Shulman, 1986a, 1986b) have claimed that the principal source of teachers' pedagogical knowledge is the classroom experience. Other sources of teachers' pedagogical knowledge such as their own experiences as learners in basic education and as in-service teachers, their research experience, and their implicit and personal theories of teaching or "hidden pedagogy" (Denscombe, 1982), which is also likely to help shape their pedagogical knowledge, may have been somewhat underestimated.

Accordingly, it was my goal in this study to investigate the extent to which the sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge were acknowledged and addressed in a teacher education program at a public university in Colombia. This study was based on a social constructivist paradigm since it relied on "the participants' views of the situation being studied . . . The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8).

Theoretical Background: Sources of Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge

Colombian society has had high expectations of foreign language teachers in connection to their students' competence and performance in the target language. In other words, there seems to be a major focus on the outcomes of the teaching process as these become visible through students' achievement on

national standardized examinations rather than on how teachers learn to teach or what they go through in the process of becoming teachers; nevertheless, the poor results of those examinations (ICFES, 2009) show that English language teaching in the country is not yielding the expected outcomes. One of the aspects that surely play a significant role in this situation is teacher education, "the learning and teaching of language teaching" (Freeman, 1989, p. 28). Thus, the concept of pedagogical knowledge and the various sources of such knowledge are inherent and relevant to the larger area of language teacher education. Various sources of pedagogical knowledge can be identified through the literature and classified into categories which, given the complex nature of teacher learning, inevitably overlap. Basically teachers learn from being learners and observers, from professional teacher education and training, from teaching experience, from their "wisdom of practice" (Shulman, 1987), and from their engagement in research.

The first source of teachers' knowledge is the role played by their own teachers from the time they are students in elementary school and then as they move through the different stages of general and specialized education. In a prominent study, Lortie (1975) encapsulated this source of teacher knowledge in what he called "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61). This concept, according to Borg (2004, p. 274), describes "the phenomenon whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action." This led Lin (2005) to conclude that "a teacher's experience as a student before she enters the teacher education program could have an impact on her experience as a teacher learner in such a program as well as on her actual teaching practice" (p. 11). Thus, it can be inferred that the years of contact with teachers in primary and secondary schools, teacher training and education programs, the process of teaching practice and pre-service

training as well as learning from peers and colleagues constitute aspects that influence teacher knowledge within this category.

Clearly linked to the previous source of pedagogical knowledge, the second one establishes that teachers also learn to teach from the education and training that they receive in teacher education programs. These programs are usually offered in the Colombian context by universities where, as pointed out by Freeman (2002), learning to teach typically involved mastering the specific content one was to teach and separately mastering methodologies for conveying that content to learners. Still today, these two aspects of content and methodology are often covered through the different courses that make up the curriculum of many EFL teacher education programs as new teachers, according to Freeman (2002), continue to be considered "blank slates" with no prior knowledge of teaching upon entering their professional training. As a result, historically, aspects that we know can have a positive impact on future teachers such as previous learning experiences, pre-service teaching experience, and research have, in many cases, been overlooked as potential sources for how new teachers construct pedagogical knowledge in their professional education.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) have equally revealed that many teacher education programs which focus on language continue to operate under the assumption that they must provide teachers with a codified body of knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching. In these programs future teachers are exposed to a range of methodologies and provided with field experience (teaching practice) in which they are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge in actual classrooms.

The third source of pedagogical knowledge emphasizes the knowledge that teachers gain from their own teaching experience. It may also be referred to as experiential learning which is defined by

Jamieson (1994) as "learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied, and makes use of that direct contact to acquire changed insights that are carried forward to subsequent encounters with other realities" (p. 40). It is important to notice that this source of pedagogical knowledge is directly related to the previous one of professional teacher education and training since teachers can begin to accumulate teaching experience as part of being enrolled in a teacher education program when they first have to teach part of a lesson or a whole lesson to their peers (usually in the methods courses).

For this type of knowledge Kolb (1984) proposes an experiential learning cycle consisting of four modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Concrete experience involves intuitive or "gut" feeling. This is followed by reflective observation, that is, perception and comprehension of what happened. This is then followed by abstract conceptualization, which requires the teacher to think and formulate a concept in relation to what happened. This subsequently leads to active experimentation, which involves the teacher applying in a subsequent lesson what he learned from a previous teaching event. Eventually, this will require further concrete experience, and so the cycle goes on.

Research into teachers' pedagogical knowledge is also based on the assumption that what teachers do in the classroom has its origins in thoughts or mental acts, which have been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs gathered through years of being a teacher (Borg, 2003; Calderhead, 1996). This refers to Shulman's (1987) "wisdom of practice" or knowledge constructed from teachers' mental lives (Walberg, 1977). As highlighted by Duarte (1998), "to understand how teachers learn to teach and how they come to conceptualize what they do, we need to focus on the mental lives of teachers and the activity of teaching as practiced by teachers" (p. 618).

To help us understand teachers' mental lives, Freeman (2002) indicates that while accurate maps of teaching can be observed by studying the profession from the outside in, what is truly happening will not be grasped until the people who are actually doing the teaching articulate what they understand about it. This promotes a perspective from inside out—teachers constructing knowledge about how to teach as a result of being mentally engaged in the teaching process. Accordingly, helping new teachers interpret and give meaning to their own experiences might lead them to develop empirical and pedagogical insights which will simultaneously allow them "to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 27).

A last source of pedagogical knowledge relates to the knowledge derived from teachers' engagement in research. Shulman (1987) asserts that the research that teachers can benefit from can be both generic and content-specific. Generic research is carried out in another area but with direct implications for teaching whereas content-specific is the type of research done in aspects related to teaching such as classroom management and patterns of interaction. It follows that doing content-specific research is more likely to help teachers to generate new knowledge and new theories to be tested in their own classrooms. In this respect, research can become a means for teachers "to become active users and producers of theory in their own right . . . and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, as cited in Johnson, 2006, p. 240).

In short, research may help teachers generate new knowledge and therefore provide solutions to their own teaching problems. The challenge for teacher education programs is then to create opportunities and promote alternatives throughout the curriculum for teacher learners to engage in research as they gain knowledge about teaching. Johnson (2006) claims that research could emerge out of questions posed

by student teachers in their practice settings and can enable them to bring a new sense of meaning to their conceptions of teaching.

One can only wonder, as Shulman (1987, p. 7) rightfully states, "at how the extensive knowledge of teaching can be learned at all during the brief period allotted to teacher preparation." This is why language teacher education programs should contribute to at least raise awareness in teacher learners about the major sources of teachers' pedagogical knowledge so that they can benefit from those once they finish their initial teacher education experience. The interest of the study I undertook was, then, to explore the extent to which the varied sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge were acknowledged and addressed in a teacher education program at a public university in Colombia.

Method

Research Questions and Type of Study

The nature of my questions relied on the participants' responses and the analysis of official documents (e.g., curriculum and course syllabi), and so asked for a qualitative orientation with an interpretative approach to inquiry. The questions were:

- To what extent are the participants in a teacher education program in a public university in Colombia aware of the different sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge?
- How are the sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge evidenced in the curriculum or coursework of the teacher education program?

Participants

There were two groups of participants in this research project: EFL teacher educators and EFL novice teachers. There was a total of ten individuals, five in each group, five female and five male. The five EFL

teacher educators (TE01, TE02, TE03, TE04, and TE05) worked in the same EFL teacher education program. All of them had completed postgraduate study in the form of a Master's degree in ELT or in Applied Linguistics. Each one had no less than fifteen years of experience as EFL teachers and as teacher educators. In contrast, the five EFL novice teachers (NT01, NT02, NT03, NT04, and NT05) were former graduates and recently qualified teachers from the same EFL teacher education program. Therefore, they held a Bachelor's degree in EFL Teaching and possessed two to three years of experience as EFL teachers in private and public elementary and secondary schools in the region. Participants were purposefully selected to help me understand the research questions, given my past experience with them as either their colleague or their former teacher.

Data Collection and Analysis

Given the qualitative nature of the study and the relatively small number of participants, I decided to use a semi-structured interview (see Appendix) and the official documents which supported the EFL teacher education program. The purposes of the interview were to obtain information about the participants' level of awareness of the sources of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and to record their views regarding whether those sources were addressed in the EFL teacher education program they worked for in the case of the EFL teacher educators or had graduated from in the case of the EFL novice teachers. The interviews were arranged with each participant and conducted by myself.

On the other hand, the purpose I had in mind when looking at the program documents was to find evidence of whether the sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge were in any way addressed through the EFL teacher education program curriculum. For this purpose, I conducted a careful analysis based on reading, comparing, and

contrasting the contents of such documents. One relevant consideration was that since "documents cannot be regarded as providing objective accounts of a state of affairs" (Bryman, 2008, p. 522), they had to be examined in the context of the data obtained through the interviews in the first part of the study.

I began by looking at the "Proyecto Educativo del Programa" (Educational Project of the Program, henceforth PEP). This document contained a full description of all the aspects that constituted the program (including historical background, rationale, legal framework, mission and vision statements, theoretical framework, curriculum structure, resources, research processes, alumni, and evaluation). I decided to focus on the chapter dealing with the curriculum structure. Accordingly, I examined the syllabi of the following courses: pedagogy, DIPDI (Didactics and Practice of English) I, II, and III and Teaching Practice I and II. In the context of this EFL teacher education program, the methods studies consist of three courses that are part of the program study plan where students are expected to gain more direct and explicit knowledge about language learning and teaching.

To ensure validity of the data and the analysis, I piloted the interview questions and collected data from three sources (teacher educators' interviews, novice teachers' interviews, and analysis of official documents) in order to achieve triangulation.

I designed a data analysis plan in five stages, based on the combination of Burns' (1999) and Creswell's (2009) analysis frameworks. The first stage involved transcribing the interviews and selecting the sections of the official documents that I thought to be most relevant to my research interest.

The second stage consisted of reading through the interview transcriptions and official documents to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. I began to notice patterns that related to the previous categories or sources

of pedagogical knowledge presented earlier in the theoretical background section.

The third stage focused on coding the data. Accordingly, I first selected an interview with a teacher educator that I thought was interesting and reread it establishing categories and labeling them according to the types of knowledge established in the theoretical background. After this, I continued to follow the same procedure with the rest of the interviews and the official documents.

The fourth stage consisted of comparing the different lists to see whether patterns or themes were repeated or related to each other across the data sources. This was also done in an attempt to reduce the number of categories, something that was difficult to achieve at times given the distinctive nature of the different ones. In short, the aim so far had been "to describe and display the data rather than to interpret or explain it" (Burns, 1999, p. 158).

The fifth stage involved interpreting or making sense of the meaning of the data on the basis of my understanding, knowledge of the context, experiences, and theories derived from the theoretical background. Sometimes it was necessary to go back to the established categories and the data to rethink my assumptions and/or develop new interpretations of the meaning of the data.

The final stage, as suggested by Creswell (2009), concerns "how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative" (p. 189). I opted for using a narrative organized according to specific categories to communicate the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed as to the purpose of the study and of the interview, the time it would take them to answer the questions, and how the data would be used. After this, they were asked to sign a form giving their consent before beginning the interviews. As for the access to the official documents,

the Head of the EFL teacher education program gave me permission to obtain a copy of the PEP and of the course syllabi. She was equally informed of the purposes of collecting and analyzing such documents and of the issues having to do with confidentiality.

Findings

After following the five stages of the analysis plan, I was able to organize the information provided by the participants and the documents in the following categories, based on the types of pedagogical knowledge presented in the theoretical background section of this paper (list of categories). I now present illustrative examples of information for each.

Knowledge from Teachers in Early Education

All the teacher educators and two novice teachers in the study acknowledged that they had gained pedagogical knowledge from different teachers (Spanish, math, English, chemistry, physics) across the basic stages of education (e.g., primary and secondary schools). However, the knowledge they believed they had gained from those teachers was more broadly connected to human qualities and personality traits such as ways of interacting and establishing a rapport with students, being patient, caring, respectful, and having a good sense of humor. This is supported by TE02 who described her high school teachers as follows: "They were good communicators, they were good in their field, they transmitted excitement, passion, feelings towards the subject, and they were also concerned about their students' learning." NT02 also expressed the way he felt about his favorite high school teacher: "I became interested in English because of the way he treated us…he made everyone in the classroom feel important."

Nevertheless, to a lesser extent, three teacher educators and one novice teacher made reference to knowledge they had gained from their former

secondary school teachers in regard to methodological or teaching aspects. For example, TE03 claimed the following about one of his former high school teachers: "[He] made me like the profession because he was a very good teacher and had a rich background in the methodology part of teaching a foreign language" while NT04, in reference to her English teacher in secondary school, stated that she "liked her methodology because she used to give [us] a lot of meaningful tasks." Some teacher educators mentioned things they remembered their teachers in secondary school did but they at present would not do since they thought they were inconsistent with their current philosophy of teaching. This is related to how "participants used previous teachers as models—and at times anti-models—to fashion what they do or do not do in the classroom" (Vélez-Rendón, 2002, p. 459). For example, TE01 referred to the fact that some of his high school teachers showed some kind of bias when assessing students and it resulted in their not being fair with some students. He emphasized that this was "something that he had avoided himself doing in his profession." Likewise, TE03 commented on how a teacher she had in high school was bad-tempered to the point that she was afraid of her. This had made her realize the importance of building a rapport with her students at present.

While four out of five teacher educators considered that students bring some knowledge about teaching when they enter the teacher education program, three out of five novice teachers claimed that they did not bring any knowledge about teaching when they first entered such a program. In this regard, NT02 claimed the following: "I started from scratch at the university…what I know is what I learned from the university, that's it!…in the didactics classes, in the pedagogy, psychology but I didn't have any previous knowledge." In the same way, NT03 commented:

> I didn't know much about teaching…I just had the idea that teaching was like…you go to a classroom…the teacher says to

you what you have to do and you have to be responsible, to be silent and do your tasks.

In short, teacher educators seemed to be more aware of how the primary and secondary school learning experiences constitute an important source of pedagogical knowledge.

After analyzing the official documents as a whole, there appears to be no evidence of this source of teachers' pedagogical knowledge being addressed through the courses in the program. This might be interpreted as if the program either took this source of pedagogical knowledge for granted or expected that students would recognize it as a result of their own experience after they graduated.

An important consideration was brought to light by TE01, TE05, and NT02 who realized that there was a type of students who entered the program with more metacognitive knowledge about teaching. These are students who come from "Escuelas Normales" (public secondary schools with a strong pedagogical orientation) and are thought to be equipped "with certain conceptual and procedural tools [since] they study courses on pedagogy, psychology, and specific didactics" (TE01) as part of their secondary education curriculum. Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, no studies have been conducted to determine whether the students who enter the teacher education program from Escuelas Normales actually outperform the other students in terms of teaching skills.

Knowledge From Observation During Pre-service or In-Service Teacher Education

It was interesting to note that most of the participants claimed to have gained pedagogical knowledge from observing other teachers even though they had very limited opportunities to do so as part of their initial teacher education program. Most of them claimed that student teachers in the program usually

have the first two weeks of their teaching practice period for observing the groups they will eventually teach. However, the circumstances typically allow them to actually observe two to four classes within that time. In this respect, although reference to classroom observation was found in some of the course syllabi (e.g., DIPDI I stated that "students have to do some field work in a public school: diagnostic and class observation [trans.]" and DIPDI III established that "participation from students will be required in different tasks . . . such as visiting schools to observe classes"), there was not enough information as to how, for how long or in what conditions such observation would take place.

Alternatively, TE01 stated that he had learned a lot from the observations he had made of other teachers in two complementary senses: "because I have seen some things which I say to myself; this is worth trying in my own classroom so I am gonna do it but there are other things which I considered worth improving so I never do that."

TE04 also affirmed that "observing other teachers allows you to think about what you do as a teacher. It's like seeing yourself through others." It follows then that observing other teachers takes on relevance if the teacher education program considers that getting students to observe other more experienced EFL primary and secondary school teachers early on in the curriculum could help reduce the fact that many students become afraid when they have to begin their teaching practice since, for many of them, it is the first time they have to be in a classroom with forty or fifty students in the position of novice teachers. This is equally supported by TE02 who argued that students "should observe more perhaps since the beginning of their studies so that they are more familiar with the problems they are going to be dealing with" and by NT05 who considered that students should start going to observe teachers in primary or high schools in the fourth or fifth semesters since, according to him,

"There are many students in the program who start working as teachers at this point of their career and do not have experience so it would be nice so that they can do a better job." He further added:

> My girlfriend is a nurse, and she told me that when she was in the second semester they started going to the hospital and doing different things, different practices so why not doing something like that here in the language teacher program.

This class observation, as stated by TE03, must be accompanied by some reflection so as to help students compare the theories they learn about language teaching in the teacher education program and the circumstances of an authentic language teaching context. In this sense, Freeman and Johnson (1998) claimed that the knowledge base of language teaching remains generally disconnected from the authentic activity of teaching in actual classrooms and this was echoed by every novice teacher in the study who stressed how different the teaching reality was in comparison to what they had been taught about it in the teacher education program.

Knowledge From Teacher Education Programs and Courses

Most of the participants in the study also seemed to recognize having gained pedagogical knowledge from their initial teacher education program and from postgraduate education courses. The majority of novice teachers seemed to be a lot more emphatic in terms of considering the teacher education program as the primary source of their pedagogical knowledge followed at a distance by teaching experience. They mentioned lesson planning, theories about learning and teaching, methods and approaches as some of the elements they had learned in the teacher education program and insisted that the knowledge they acquired in this program, especially through the methods courses (DIPDIS), constituted the foundations of what they do today. Analysis of the

syllabi similarly revealed that DIPDI I emphasized topics such as language learning theories and teaching methods; DIPDI II made reference to the teaching and integration of the linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and the teaching of grammar and vocabulary; while DIPDI III focused on issues such as teaching English to children, classroom management, and course design and evaluation.

As for teacher educators, most of them tended to see their college teacher education program and postgraduate education courses, especially MA studies in the area of ELT or applied linguistics, as just other sources of pedagogical knowledge together with teaching experience and research. For example, TE01 and TE04 said that at present they promote autonomous learning among their students because they were autonomous learners themselves in their initial teacher education program and claimed that it brings many benefits to their learners. In this respect, TE01 stated that

> As a language learner I was very autonomous. I liked to go beyond what was given in the classroom. I used to practice English with some partners outside the classroom, so I'd say that one of my teaching traits is that; to promote autonomy, because I am very conscious that everything is not possible to be done in the classroom.

In contrast, TE02 argued that her experience as a language learner in the initial teacher education program did not influence the way she taught because she learned English using the audio-lingual method. According to her, she was simply asked to repeat sentences and memorize many words so she thought this was not compatible with a more communicative methodology she appeared to follow at present. Likewise, TE05 said that his experience as a language learner in the program did not influence the way he taught now and that in fact he "did not enjoy his experience as a learner of English." These situations may show that these two teacher educators focused

on what they saw as inappropriate or unpleasant during their experience as English language learners at college and therefore tended to overlook the fact that learning to teach can also occur as a result of seemingly inappropriate methodologies or unpleasant circumstances. TE03 appeared to be more aware of this fact when she said:

> My experience as a language learner in college has made me reflect about the weaknesses I had as an English learner and I try to improve now and to look for other strategies to help students become more effective language learners.

Knowledge From Experience as EFL Teachers

All the participants clearly recognized their experience as EFL teachers as contributing to their pedagogical knowledge with teacher educators being perhaps a bit more emphatic about it. This reflects the point raised by Calderhead and Miller (1986) and Shulman (1986b) in relation to classroom experience being apparently the main source of teacher knowledge. Thus, TE01 said that this kind of experience "shows him how to adapt his teaching style to different audiences every year, every semester." TE02 also argued that she was more aware of her students' needs. She was also more concerned about teaching the four skills because she wanted her students to be fluent in English.

Interestingly, TE03 connected her previous experience as a teacher with the opportunities she had had to do research. In this respect, she affirmed the following:

> Experience has helped me a lot because if you do not stop to reflect about what you do, sometimes the experience by itself doesn't help much in transforming what you do every day, but only when you have your experience but at the same time you stop to research what you are doing or what other teachers are doing, I think it's more fruitful for your classes.

In a similar way, TE04 established a connection between teaching experience and the act of reflection as follows:

> Experience gives you the opportunity to reflect on the way you were doing things, on the way you are doing…your teaching. You find that some events make you reflect about the way you're doing and…in my case, if I find something that is not working properly I try to look for something else and I try to change the way I am doing it.

Novice teachers also argued that teaching experience had played an influential role for them in learning to teach. They claimed to have gained knowledge about a great variety of aspects such as classroom management (NT02, NT04), understanding the difference between activities for children and activities for young learners, using different teaching resources (NT03). As an illustration, NT02 made the following remark:

> When I just started to teach I was extremely nice with the students…I wanted to be loved by my students and so I let them do whatever they wanted…but with the time I have become more serious and more strict…my classroom management has improved tons.

In the same way, from the analysis of the official documents as a whole, the EFL teacher education program appears to be aware of the importance of experience as a source of teacher knowledge. Thus, it provides opportunities for students to be engaged in micro teaching in the methods course (i.e., DIPDI I) as an initial tool to help them gain experience in teaching. Additionally, it established two periods of teaching practice in the last two semesters of the curriculum, which give students the possibility of accumulating experience by teaching English for one semester in a primary school and another one in a secondary school. As stated in the course objectives of the teaching practice syllabus, this teaching

experience "gets the student teachers involved with aspects such as lesson planning, teaching skills, students' assessment, extra-curricular activities, use of resources, and reflection and self-evaluation." Consequently, it is evident that teaching experience appears to constitute a very important source of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and also that it tends to be connected to other elements such as reflection and research which equally play an essential role in how teachers learn to teach.

Knowledge From Teachers' Mental Lives

The implicit and personal theories of teaching (hidden pedagogy—Denscombe, 1982) seem to be consolidated by means of a lifelong process of reflection and experience. Therefore this source of pedagogical knowledge is closely linked to the categories discussed so far in this section. As can be inferred, reflection constitutes an invaluable tool and in that way I hoped to see how aware the participants were, not in terms of seeing reflection as a source of pedagogical knowledge but seeing it as a mechanism that would bring to light knowledge derived from teachers' mental lives.

One way of helping student teachers to develop these implicit theories and therefore construct new knowledge is by often asking them about the reasons behind their teaching actions and decisions. In this respect, all the teacher educators in the study, except for TE02, recognized that during the feedback sessions after observing their teaching practice they ask their student teachers questions about the decisions and actions they take in class. Asking student teachers questions about the pedagogical decisions or actions they take when they teach is one way to not only see what they have learned and how they think but is also a mechanism to trigger reflection and thus ensure that they are beginning to build their own personal

implicit theories of teaching, which tend to constitute another often undervalued source of teacher knowledge. TE01 indicated that when giving feedback to student teachers he elicited responses for some of the teaching actions they take in class. This, he believes, "contributes to their own self-disclosure in a catalytic way…trying to have them self-discovered." Similarly, TE03 also said that she tried "to involve them in self-reflection by asking them why they did certain things in class and so make them aware of the theory they study."

In terms of the act of reflection itself, most teacher educators claimed that although they did not have the chance to practice self-reflection when they were going through their pre-service teacher education, some of them had done it as part of their in-service teacher education. For instance, TE02 said that she asked students questions (e.g., What worked in this course? What didn't work? What was memorable? What would you suggest the teacher do to improve this course?) towards the end of the course in order to trigger reflection about the teaching process. In contrast, the novice teachers claimed that they had limited opportunities to self-reflect as part of their experience in the EFL teacher education program. NT02 and NT03 also affirmed that as student teachers they were asked to keep a teacher journal where they were supposed to reflect on what had happened in their classes. Unfortunately, as pointed out by TE04, "those reflections are more like descriptions of their classes in many cases." After analyzing the documents, it could be confirmed that those limited opportunities appeared mostly during the last two or three semesters of the program curriculum, especially in the courses of DIPDI III and teaching practice I and II. In spite of this, many of the participants insisted that reflection should be promoted from the beginning of the curriculum.

Knowledge From Research Experience

Teacher educators without exception seemed to be aware that research is also a relevant source of pedagogical knowledge. In fact, most of them claimed that the research they had been engaged in was clearly connected with their own teaching situations. This might give some weight to Johnson's (2006) views on teachers as investigators of their own teaching practice. TE02 affirmed that by doing research, she had learned a lot about theory, about her students, about the real world because she had "read other works that other teachers [had] done in different parts of the world" and continued to add that "research kept her alive, motivated and excited about her teaching." In terms of activities they applied in their classes and that were derived from their own research experiences, they emphasized the use of communicative tasks, the promotion of autonomous learning among the students, the use of reflection journals and new methodologies for teaching English to children.

In a related issue, all the teacher educators coincided in saying that students in the EFL teacher education program do not do research anymore. Nevertheless, in reading through the PEP, I observed that the program set as a general goal that "students are expected to develop competence in research and so be able to generate new knowledge in connection to the process of foreign language learning and teaching" (Universidad Surcolombiana, 2004, p. 55). Additionally, the same document clearly established that the EFL teacher education program "tends to familiarize students with the research process from the beginning of the program (Trans.)" (Universidad Surcolombiana, 2004, p. 58). This can be contrasted with the fact that only two of the five novice teachers in the study claimed that they had done research in the program. NT03 claimed that although she did not have to do research, she took part in a research group whose main area of research had to do with the type of methodologies EFL teachers used in their classes and NT05 conducted a research study in relation to strengthening virtues and values through the teaching of EFL as his final undergraduate research project in the program. The remaining three (NT01, NT02, NT04) stated that they had not done research when they were students in the program. Specifically, NT02 remarked: "The thing is that I didn't do research and so…I feel I don't have the skills. I have not learned the skills to do research…that may be a reason why I don't do it now."

Despite the fact that all the novice teachers perceived research as important, it was obviously impossible for most of them to speak of something they had learned from it. In contrast, NT03 affirmed having learned the importance of "visualizing [her] self doing the activities [she was] planning and using more realia in [her] classes" while NT05, who was also enrolled in an MA program at the time of this study, claimed that the experience of doing research in the undergraduate program had helped him in his postgraduate studies to the point that he felt he had more advantages over those students that had not been engaged in research at all.

Still, the teacher education program offers courses such as Research Methodology and Research Seminar in the V and VI semesters in which students get minimally acquainted with the theoretical elements for doing research. Nevertheless, teacher educators and novice teachers appeared to feel that much more is required to get the students in the program to see research as a source of their own pedagogical knowledge.

Conclusions

Most teacher educators in the study appeared to be aware that EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge comes from various sources. Those they emphasized the most were their learning experience in basic and general education, their initial language teacher education program, their experience as language

teachers, and their engagement in research. In terms of the EFL novice teachers in the study, they seemed to mostly agree that their initial teacher education program (especially the methods courses) followed by their experience as language teachers comprised the two main sources of their pedagogical knowledge. To a lesser extent, sources of teachers' pedagogical knowledge associated with learning experiences in early education, classroom observation, and reflection, doing research, and teachers' implicit and personal theories of teaching were recognized by either one or two novice teachers.

Analysis of the official documents allowed me to conclude that sources related to the theoretical knowledge about teaching, the teaching experience in the form of microteaching, and the teaching practice appeared to be evidenced in the EFL teacher education program curriculum while others (observing other experienced school teachers, conducting research, and promoting teachers' implicit theories of teaching through reflective teaching), although minimally emphasized along the study plan, still needed to be fully integrated and further addressed in the program. Likewise, there seems to be no evidence of how the EFL teacher education program helps students become aware of the fact that their learning experiences in basic education also constitute an important source of their pedagogical knowledge.

It was interesting to note that two teacher educators claimed that it was impossible for the four-year (the length of the program) EFL teacher education program to cover everything teachers need to know about teaching. They further argued that this program gave students only the foundations and therefore teacher learners actually started learning to teach after they graduated from the program. In this respect, although it is common sense to think that students will not learn everything about teaching during their initial teacher education program, it might be expected that through that program, students do at least gain awareness regarding the fact that teachers' pedagogical knowledge derives from many sources and not merely from the methods courses in the teacher education program.

Recommendations for Colombian Teacher Preparation Programs

It is imperative to design mechanisms that lead students to further acknowledge and use their learning experiences in primary and secondary school as an essential source of their pedagogical knowledge. This might also help them realize that regardless of whether those experiences had a positive or negative impact on them, they clearly influenced their knowledge base about teaching.

It is also necessary for the program to provide more opportunities for students to visit and observe EFL classrooms in real school settings where they might eventually work as EFL teachers. This observation should start to take place earlier on in the study plan in order to help them better assimilate the transition and reduce the mismatch they claimed exists between the university teacher education experience and the actual teaching reality in schools.

Finally, EFL teacher education programs should promote alternatives such as action research during the teaching practice and systematic reflection throughout the curriculum in order to help teacher learners discover their implicit theories of teaching and construct their personal practical knowledge about how to teach.

The findings of this study have definitely enriched my understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of learning to teach. However, I have the feeling that this is just an initial attempt to delve into the sources of EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Investigating whether or not those sources are equally recognized and addressed in other EFL teacher education programs in other regions in Colombia is probably worthy of consideration.

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About the Author

Diego Fernando Macías is an assistant teacher of English at Universidad Surcolombiana (Colombia). He holds an MA in English from Governors State University (USA) and an MA in TESOL from the University of Brighton (UK). His areas of interest are language teacher education, English as an international language, and web-based technologies.

Appendix: Interview Guide for Participants

Note: The questions below were used for both teacher educators and novice teachers. However, questions 8 and 11 were only addressed to TES and question 12 to NTS.

1. Did you have a favorite teacher when you were in primary or secondary school? Why was he/she your favorite?
2. Did you have a teacher you hated/disliked in primary or secondary school? Why did you hate/dislike them?
3. Has your own experience as an English language learner influenced the way you teach? If so, in what ways?
4. How much has your experience as an EFL teacher after you graduated from the university teacher education program influenced how you teach?
5. What kind of knowledge *about teaching* do you think first semester students bring to the EFL teacher education program?
6. To what degree has observing other teachers in their classes helped you learn how to teach?
7. Did you have any opportunities to self-reflect in your process of becoming a language teacher in the EFL teacher education program? If so, how has self-reflection contributed to the way you teach English?
8. How much research do students in the EFL teacher education program (where you currently work) do? (For TES only)
9. Did you do research along the EFL teacher education program? If so, how has the research you have done influenced your teaching skills?
10. What role does the knowledge about teaching you acquired in the EFL teacher education program play in how you teach English?
11. When observing student teachers and giving them feedback, do you ever ask them about why they engage in/make certain teaching actions or pedagogical decisions in class? (For TES only)
12. How did you find the teaching reality of actual classrooms to be compared to what you learned about it in the EFL teacher education program? (For NTS only)
13. Where do you think the knowledge you have about teaching English comes from?