ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS OF ADULT ENGLISH ACQUIRERS

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ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS OF ADULT ENGLISH ACQUIRERS

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Abstract

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IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS OF ADULT ENGLISH ACQUIRERS

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Tom LoGuidice and Dr. Richard A. Rogers

At the time of this study, the following questions arose regarding the acquisition of language for adults. What was known about teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) when the students were adult immigrants? What was known about adults in the process of language acquisition as compared to children? What was known about preparing teachers to work with adult English language acquirers? What form should professional development take, and what content should be included in the professional development? As a result of this research, the author of this paper brought answers to these questions together to inform professionals, who design teacher preparation programs or professional development opportunities for those serving adult English acquirers.

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Chapter One: Introduction

At the time of this study, the following questions arose regarding the acquisition of language for adults. What was known about teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) when the students were adult immigrants? What was known about adults in the process of language acquisition as compared to children? What was known about preparing teachers to work with adult English language acquirers? What form should professional development take, and what content should be included in the professional development? As a result of this research, the author of this paper brought answers to these questions together to inform professionals, who design teacher preparation programs or professional development opportunities for those serving adult English acquirers.

Statement of the Problem

The immigrant population in the United States had been steadily increasing. From 2000 to 2010, the immigrant population increased by 14 million in the United States. Even states that had previously not experienced large influxes of immigrants had seen significant increases in their immigrant population. In the same ten-year span, Wisconsin saw an increase of 61,169 immigrants, which was an immigrant population increase of 31.6%. Census data indicated in 2011 that 121,860 adults (18 and older) spoke English "less than very well" in the state of Wisconsin. This population was projected to continue to increase (US Census, 2011).

With the increase in Wisconsin's immigrant population, an even greater need developed for educational services to support the language acquisition and literacy requisites of this population. In Wisconsin, adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes were provided with state funds (General Purpose Revenue - GPR) and federal funds (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act - AEFL) from the Department of

Education. Services in basic skills and English language education were mainly provided in the state by the Wisconsin Technical College System in compliance with Chapter 38 of the WI State Statutes and through various community-based organization and Wisconsin Literacy, Incorporated. The Wisconsin State Statutes 38.001(d) in its mission and purpose stated that "technical colleges must provide education in basic skills to enable students to effectively function at a literate level in society" (A. J. Nuńez (personal communication, August 21, 2012).

With the growing need for educational services to meet the ESL and ABE needs of English acquirers, a growing need was identified for qualified professionals to serve this population. Furthermore, this had been a challenge not just in Wisconsin, but in the entire United States (Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, Burt, 2007). Many teachers who had provided services for the adult ESL population had not been trained "pre-service" to specifically work with adult learners acquiring English. This meant that practitioners who had worked with adult English acquirers were often ill-equipped to do so (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Why were practitioners so ill-equipped?

First, few programs were designed to provide certification or credentials in teaching adult English acquirers. At the time of this study, an investigation of available programs in the state of Wisconsin located only one program to equip teachers to work with adult English acquirers (AEAs). This program was located at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin. The next closest program to Wisconsin geographically was located at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. This online learning program provided graduate credit and certification upon successful completion of four two-credit courses.

Second, many practitioners serving AEAs were part-time employees who taught multiple subjects in multiple locations. Many were not paid to participate in professional development

opportunities. Because these practitioners were scattered geographically and often served multiple organizations to piece together full-time work, they often also were limited with time availability to attend professional development (PD). They might have found themselves too far geographically from quality PD programs and might have found financing PD a challenge due to their part-time employment status (Smith & Gillespie, 2007, as cited by Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007).

These challenges might have prevented practitioners serving adult English acquirers from pursuing much-needed professional development and might have presented a challenge for those developing professional development (PD) opportunities to provide accessible and affordable professional development (Sherman, Dlott, Bamford, McGivern, Cohn & American Institutes for Research, 2003). Yet having well-qualified instructors was extremely important. According to Smith & Gillespie (2007), research indicated that "Teachers are the single most important factor in raising student achievement." Authors from the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network (2010) agreed that qualified professionals were the most important factor in increasing learning and student progression rates from one level to the next.

For adult English acquirers, having qualified teachers was a more personal issue. According to a report issued by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 2000, oral proficiency in English was instrumental in obtaining employment for immigrants and refugees and adequate literacy was necessary for promotion and work advances. This meant that the standard of living for immigrant families was dependent upon having access to excellent instruction.

The preliminary review of literature indicated that more programs were needed to educate practitioners serving AEAs and these programs needed to be carefully designed to meet unique needs. A more extensive review of literature was conducted to answer the following questions:

1.) What did educational professionals know about adult learners and what was unique about AEAs? What set them apart from children acquiring English?

2.) What was known about effective professional development for practitioners serving AEAs?

3.) What were possible topics to cover when designing professional development opportunities for those serving AEAs?

Definition of Terms

The use of the term "adult English acquirers" (AEAs) in this paper referred to adult immigrant literacy students in the process of acquiring English. Most of these students in Wisconsin were served in the Technical College System in English as a Second Language (ESL), English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Adult Basic Education (ABE) classrooms or in community-based organizations that offered literacy instruction and tutoring.

Those who served this population might have been teachers or unpaid volunteers. For this reason the term "practitioner" was used to include both paid teachers and unpaid volunteers serving adult English acquirers.

ELL referred to English Language Learners.

EFL referred to English as a Foreign Language. This was the subject that students studied when they were learning English in a culture where English was not the primary language.

Delimitations of Research

The references used for the review of literature were collected from April 2012 to October 2012 using the resources of the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the Madison Area Technical College Libraries at Madison Area Technical College in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. Several search engines provided by EBSCOHOST were used. The key search terms were "professional development," "ESL" and "adult," "language acquisition" and "adult," and "adult developmental" and "learner."

Method of Approach

A review of literature was conducted for these topics. In Chapter 2 of this seminar research paper, the findings were summarized. Following the review of literature, a brief discussion of the implications for designers of professional development opportunities for practitioners serving adult English acquirers was included. This discussion, including conclusions and recommendations, comprised Chapter 3.

A list of possible topics for professional development for AEAs was included in this paper as Appendix A. These topics appeared in the literature reviewed for this paper as important topics for teachers of AEAs. The topics were gathered from the research and then grouped together with other similar topics to create Appendix A. This list could be used to create a comprehensive program for practitioners serving AEAs, or individual topics could be used for briefer in-service activities.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Many practitioners serving adult English acquirers came to the field indirectly. Some might have come from elementary or secondary education and others might have come from a linguistics background. Still other practitioners, often volunteer tutors for community-based organizations, might not have had any teaching experience, knowledge of second language acquisition theory, or any experience working with adult learners. A literature review was conducted to determine, first, what was written about adult learners in general; then, what was written about adult English acquirers; and specifically and finally, what was written about professional development to prepare practitioners to work with adult English acquirers. To follow is the summary of this review.

Adult Learners

At the time of this study, two sources were gold mines of information about teaching adults. *Teaching Adult Students* by Cheryl J. Polson (1993) and 30 *Things We Know For Sure About Adult Learning* by Ron and Susan Zemke (1984) were excellent resources for all adult practitioners and for those designing professional development opportunities for this population. To follow is a brief summary of the principles of adult learning explained in these two resources:

- Adults had many responsibilities. This impacted the time and energy they had for professional development. Life commitments had to be respected and honored.
- Adults came with varied, rich life experiences. These experiences needed to be acknowledged so that new learning could be connected with existing knowledge and beliefs. Sometimes this aided in learning and sometimes it created barriers to learning.

- Adults went through different transitions because of life events. Often, these transitions urged a person toward the pursuit of education of various kinds. Practitioners needed to be aware that the professional development opportunity might have been part of the participants' desire to work through a transition. Because of this, adult learners liked "how-to" learning opportunities. This made learning immediately applicable.
- Adults might have been away from education for a while and might have needed assistance adjusting to being a learner again. Professional development facilitators needed to provide support, build confidence, and ensure comfort to assist all participants to transition back to learning.
- Adults wanted professional development/educational opportunities to meet specific goals or needs. Professional Development (PD) facilitators needed to ask participants about their goals, expectations and needs for the PD opportunity and provide feedback about how the PD offering would (or would not) connect with those.
- Adults preferred courses that focused on fewer large concepts that were explored in more depth. This preference increased with age.
- Adults preferred to learn concepts without fast-paced, unusual, or complicated activities that might interfere with learning.
- Adults could have been sensitive about making errors. They also might have been sensitive about being slower with psychomotor activities and might have compensated for this by focusing on accuracy.

- Adults brought various viewpoints and values and went through different life stages. Professional development facilitators needed to create an accepting and respectful environment.
- Adults liked self-directed, self-designed learning projects. They liked to control pace and stop/start times.
- Adults liked face-to-face, one-to-one access to experts. Whenever possible, these types of direct communication needed to be incorporated into learning opportunities.

Adult English Acquirers (AEAs)

Adult English Acquirers were a specific subset of adult learners. While the principles of adult learning certainly applied to AEAs, to follow is a summary of additional information that was found during this study that revealed more about Adult English Acquirers, specifically.

No "typical" Adult English Acquirer. Adult English acquirers were a diverse group. They differed in culture and country of origin, age, gender, education and work experience, literacy level in their first and other languages, and proficiency level of English. They might have been completely unfamiliar with written language or unfamiliar with a new writing system (Crandall, 1993). Yet all of these students might have appeared in the same English acquisition/literacy class and practitioners serving this population needed to recognize how each of these characteristics might have affected pedagogical decisions.

Second/Other language acquisition theory and research. While some practitioners might have believed that being a native speaker alone was enough preparation to teach English to speakers of other languages, this simply was not true. Practitioners serving AEAs needed to incorporate second language acquisition theory and research into their lesson planning (Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012).

Practitioners who previously worked in elementary or secondary school settings would need to be aware of the differences between adults acquiring a second/other language and children acquiring a second/other language. Adults had a more well-developed understanding of the world around them and had already developed many of the concepts necessary for comprehension of word meaning. Older learners often had more advanced cognitive skills like memory and analytic reasoning and could draw upon a more sophisticated information base than young children (Harper & deJong, 2004). Therefore, practitioners could have used rich context to help students access their prior knowledge to facilitate language acquisition.

According to Schleppegrell (1987), a decline in the ability to learn as people got older was not common. Hearing and vision might have declined, but the age of the adult learner was not a major factor in language acquisition. While language acquisition was different in children and adults because of developmental differences in the brain, adults had better language acquisition capabilities in the early stages of language acquisition. Many adults had highly developed cognitive systems that aided in learning vocabulary and language structures. Adults were also able to make more abstract associations and generalizations and could then integrate new language more easily. Adults also relied on long-term memory rather than rote memory techniques often used by younger learners (Schleppegrell, 1987). However, according to Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979), despite all of these advantages AEAs had over younger language acquirers, those who began natural exposure to second languages during childhood years generally achieved higher second language proficiency than those who began the language acquisition process in adulthood.

AEAs who had had limited opportunity to attend school as children brought unique challenges to the language acquisition classroom. Many such students had deficits in

background knowledge that could have had a negative impact on future learning. These adults might have needed help assembling the necessary schema to relate to various texts or topics of conversation used in the classroom. Practitioners would have needed to facilitate background knowledge building for those students and to work from the strengths of all adult students. Mathews-Aydinli (2008) found that when teachers looked at students from the perspective of strengths, positive effects resulted.

Culture and language. Adults in the process of language acquisition were challenged daily by cultural differences. Mathews-Aydinli (2008) commented that culture and language were inseparable and that second-language teaching must have included cultural components . In studies to determine what qualities were most important in teachers of AEAs, one common thread was found in most of the studies--a particular sensitivity toward the students' cultural backgrounds. Therefore, practitioners working with AEAs not only needed to help students understand this new culture in which the students were living, but also needed to work to understand the cultural backgrounds of AEAs.

Culture connected people to others. When students found themselves in a new country and a new culture, internal struggles about who they "belong[ed] to" and who they [were] might have occurred. Family members back home might have felt betrayed by the desire of a loved one to become part of a new culture. English also had economic and social value associated with it and wanting to acquire English might have been connected to ideas of Westernization. This could have been perceived as a threat to the student's home culture by relatives there (Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012). Mathews-Aydinli (2008) explained that adult learners might have found themselves in a complex dilemma. Students might have wanted to learn English for specific reasons and to feel as respected as they were in their native cultures, but they might not have

wanted to learn English so well that they felt they were turning away from native cultures and languages. This sometimes was exhibited in failure to progress, poor attendance, etc., as the AEA worked on the struggle between the life, the culture, and the language they had always known and the demands of life in a new setting.

Identity, culture, and language. Honoring the first language and cultural backgrounds of AEAs was important. This could have been done when practitioners designed discussions and writing assignments to allow students to tell about their cultures and use cultural contexts when practicing English skills in the classroom. Adult learners persisted in educational ventures when they felt welcome and part of a caring community, so practitioners could have encouraged students to share stories about their families, cultures, experiences, and beliefs (Schwarzer, 2009). Practitioners also needed to help students to function effectively in this new culture. Students needed to know the varieties and registers of English and where they were appropriate. Varieties of English included differences in the English spoken in different geographical areas such as in Great Britain, Australia, or in the Southern region of the United States. Registers of English referred to the degree of formality used when speaking in different settings. (For example, one would have used different English when speaking to young adult friends than one would have used to speak to a college professor.) AEAs needed to know how to function in various settings including academic and workplace settings (Gee, 2004 as cited in Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007).

Honoring the first language of students was a way of creating a welcoming environment. Learning a language was stressful and having students share some of their first language at various times might have provided comfort. Using the students' first languages in instruction had had positive effects. According to Goldenberg (2008), studies indicate that when ESL

students were taught to read in their first language, there was a positive effect on the reading achievement level in English. While this might not have been a practical solution in settings where many different languages are spoken by students all in the same classroom, instruction in a students' first language increased literacy and language acquisition in the second language (Goldenberg, 2008). Of course, practitioners wanted to encourage students to preserve their first language(s) and to continue to develop their language proficiency in multiple languages.

A wealth of experiences. Anyone who had listened to the survival stories of adult English acquirers knew that many students came to educational opportunities with amazing life experiences. While the life experiences might have been incredible, some AEAs might not have come to classrooms with extensive academic backgrounds. The stories and the personal character traits they illustrated are the "hooks" upon which new learning could have been connected. Practitioners serving AEAs needed to provide opportunities for students to share their stories so that connections could be drawn between past experiences and new concepts. Honoring the stories of AEAs was honoring the students. Students could use these stories to write in journals, participate in discussions, and raise intercultural awareness--activities that students felt had contributed most to their personal development according to a study summarized by Mathews-Aydinli (2008).

Holistic support. While most practitioners serving AEAs might have reported their job title as "teacher" or "tutor", other aspects of working with this population would have fallen under many different job titles. Because AEAs were dealing with many different issues while they were attending classes, these issues might have affected the ability to concentrate during class, the ability to keep regular attendance, and the ability to finish the term. With funding continually being tight for non-profit organizations and educational institutions, retention and

successful progression of students was a concern. Therefore, teachers and tutors might have found themselves providing more than just English instruction in order to support and encourage their students to progress. Barriers to attendance might have included a lack of time, money, childcare, transportation, and unfamiliarity with educational systems (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995 as cited by National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003). With all of the stresses that came with adult life, practitioners might have needed extra understanding, flexibility, sensitivity, and creativity to keep education accessible for students being pulled in many directions.

Adults also might have felt insecure about being back in school. Students might have felt uncomfortable taking risks in the classroom that could damage their self-esteem and ego. Negative past educational experiences, feelings about authority, and concern with events outside the classroom all might have affected adult students (Zemke & Zemke, 1984, p. 2). Older students might have had concerns about health problems, or might have had concerns that their memory abilities or language acquisition capabilities might not have been adequate (Mathews-Adynli, 2008). Practitioners concerned with student success and program success rates needed to be aware of these issues and needed to be sensitive to the non-academic needs of AEAs. Assisting with or advising students about physical or financial needs could have improved the chances of success for adult English acquirers.

Variation in goals. Success with language acquisition and literacy education could have been defined by different entities in different ways. Program administration might have looked only at completion, progression, and attendance rates. Teachers might have looked at assessment scores and retention. However, adult English acquirers might have defined "success" very differently. Some AEAs wanted to be able to help their children in school or they just wanted to

feel more confident in the community. Others might have needed to find work and might have viewed their participation in language and literacy education as a means toward that end. This meant that for some students, once work was secured, they had met their goals.

The authors of *Adult ESL Language and Literacy Instruction: A Vision and Action Agenda for the 21st Century* (TESOL, 2000) indicated that oral English proficiency was very important for initial employment for immigrants and refugees. However, the goal for some students might have been to obtain higher-paying work. Immigrants often earned lower wages than native-born workers. Factors affecting the income levels of immigrants included: level of education, amount of time in the United States, immigration status, and English proficiency level (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010). Literacy in English was needed for promotion to more advanced levels of work (National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).

Adult learning principles indicated that students sought education when they were in transitions in their lives. The transitions were the motivating factors; therefore, goals set by AEAs would likely have been tied to those transitional needs (Zemke & Zemke, 1984). The goals of students might not have been the same as the goals of government agencies providing the funding for the program or the teachers/tutors who taught the courses (Mathews-Adynli, 2008). Practitioners needed to make learning relevant, teach grammar and vocabulary in context, and choose materials and activities that incorporate real-life experiences (Schleppegrell, 1987) to meet the specific needs of AEAs. Program administrators needed to take into account the goals of the students being served when determining success of programs.

Lifelong learning unfamiliar.

When selecting pedagogical approaches for the AEA classroom, teachers needed to look to research and best practices. They also needed to consider the education experiences of their

students and the cultures from which they came. Teaching styles and approaches varied greatly, but in some cultures only certain teaching styles were accepted. When students came to the United States and entered the educational system as adults, they might have been surprised, confused, disappointed, and concerned by what they saw. While the Communicative Approach might have been a favored pedagogical style here in the United States, students from other cultures might have expected a more traditional instructional style. Students most familiar and comfortable with traditional instructional styles might have been dissatisfied with other approaches. If their expectations went unmet, they might have discontinued their attendance. In cases where students came from cultures where different teaching styles were used, a practitioner could have used a variety of pedagogical approaches to reach all students and helped students to understand each approach by explaining the goals and value of educational activities (Gault, 2004, as cited by Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

Some AEAs had long-term goals to move beyond basic literacy to high school credentialing programs and then to move into post-secondary educational programs. For others, the idea of being a student in the adult years was an unfamiliar one. In some cultures, school was perceived as something only for children. In the United States, lifelong learning was common and desirable. Adults could have entered educational programs at any age. In the Wisconsin Technical College System, the average age of students was 29 (Wisconsin Technical College System, 2012).

Part of the work for AEAs practitioners might have been to introduce the cultural norm of lifelong learning even at the lowest levels of literacy. Helping students to visualize themselves in post-secondary educational programs was a first step to helping students transition from literacy and language acquisition programs to higher education opportunities.

Transition to post-secondary education. Higher income levels were often associated with higher educational levels. In 2009 the average annual income for men in the United States with less than a ninth grade education was $26,604. That same year the average income for men with a high school credential was $43,140 (US Census Bureau, 2011). However, according to Mathews-Adynli (2006), the majority of jobs that paid enough to support a family required skills that could not have been obtained with just a high school education. Encouraging AEAs to continue from basic literacy, through high school credentialing, to post-secondary education was one way to increase the likelihood that AEAs and their families would have enjoyed a higher standard of living (Carnevale & Derochers, 2003, as cited by Mathews-Adynli, 2006). This idea was illustrated by the statistic for the average annual income for men in the United States with an associate degree which was $55,631 (US Census Bureau, 2011).

Practitioners serving AEAs could have assisted students to transition to higher education by focusing on language accuracy and careful use of language. They could have included extensive reading and genre-based writing in their curricula. They could have planned activities to introduce academic terminology, develop conceptual and critical thinking skills (Mathews-Adynli, 2006), and introduce strategies to organize information (Oxford-Carpenter, 1985, as cited in Schleppegrell, 1987). Transition programs could have addressed non-academic factors as well. These factors might have included transportation, childcare, time management, and application to schools. Orientation programs could have helped students learn about financial aid opportunities, learn how to cope with stress, and develop study skills. Mentors could also have been assigned and students could have been introduced to key personnel at educational institutions who would have been helpful during the transition (Mathews-Adynli, 2006). All of

these activities could have helped AEAs transition to post-secondary education and eventually realize a higher standard of living.

Effective Professional Development for Practitioners Serving Adult English Acquirers

More qualified teachers of Adult English Acquirers were needed as the immigrant population continued to increase. Well-designed professional development and pre-service educational opportunities were needed to equip teachers with the skills needed to be effective in the classroom. What topics should have been included in these professional development opportunities? The review of literature for this topic revealed the following suggestions for providing highly effective professional development (PD) opportunities for practitioners serving adult English acquirers.

Goals, data, and professional development. According to Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt (2007), designers of professional development for practitioners serving AEAs should have considered information about the students being served and the teachers who were providing services. This information should have included things like student performance data, teacher background information, data describing student attendance, registration, persistence, and progress rates. Any changes in state or local certification or licensing requirements or accountability measures should also have been considered. This information should have been analyzed, professional development goals should have been established, a plan should have been put into place, and later the evaluation of the professional development would have determined the efficacy of the PD plan in reaching the selected goals.

Learner involvement. In addition to conducting a data analysis, practitioner input was very important for effective professional development. According to Terdy (1993), practitioners were the best sources for identifying their own needs and then working with other practitioners

to identify appropriate solutions. This was consistent with adult learning principles as described in Larotta (2007) and summarized from Knowles (1990). According to adult learning principles, adults needed to know why they were learning something. They wanted to be self-directed and were engaged in learning when topics were relevant. Adults sought learning experiences generally because they recognized a use for the knowledge, so there needed to be a connection between what the adult was seeking and what the PD provided (Zemke & Zemke, 1984). Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, and Burt (2007) noted that participants and all stakeholders needed to be involved in PD planning. The scope and expected outcomes should have been chosen by all stakeholders and everyone involved should have worked to reach shared goals and understand how specific activities related to those goals. In order for PD to be applied to the work practitioners are doing, the PD had to be relevant to the participants. Relevance was determined by input from program data, student data, and input from the participants.

Participation with co-workers. Smith & Gillespie (2007) paraphrased other authors (Calderon, 1999; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000) regarding the value of having teachers participate in PD in professional communities. The authors commented that in order to change the learning environment, practitioners needed to do more than just remove individual teachers from their work environments, train and change them, and then put them back into the same environment. Rather, cohorts of practitioners should have participated in professional development opportunities together to make a greater impact.

Smith & Gillespie (2007), in summarizing work by Gardner (1996), Huberman & Miles (1984), and Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe (2003), noted that when teachers did not share strategies learned in professional development, they were less likely to implement those strategies. Smith & Gillespie (2007) further noted that Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, &

Yoon, (2001) found that when teachers from the same program or subject were grouped together for professional development, a shared vision was fostered. Creating this shared vision in professional development could have been even more valuable since many practitioners working part-time seldom met with co-workers during a term. Young (2009) reported from Hord (1997) that organizing cohorts of teachers for professional development could have reduced isolation, increased commitment to program goals and mission, and encouraged a shared responsibility for student development.

Longer duration. According to Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt (2007), research indicated that one-day workshops with little or no follow-up did not have lasting impact on teaching practices (Garet, *et al.*, 2001, as cited in Richards & Farrell, 2005). Further, the amount of time the teacher attended professional development had significant impact compared to other factors (Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007 summarized from Smith & Hofer, 2002). Smith & Gillespie (2007) agreed that designing PD to be of "longer term" was one of the features of effective professional development. Crandall (1993) summarized it this way:

> Professional development is an ongoing process, not a product which can be neatly packaged; nor is it something which can be developed in occasional workshops, the staple of many in-service staff development programs. Instead, what is needed is an ongoing series of staff development opportunities which will enable practitioners to question their own practice, expand their knowledge of and skills in improving that practice and evaluate the effectiveness of their classrooms. (p. 505)

Immediately applicable. In addition to encouraging participants to be involved in the content selection of the professional development opportunity, other strategies could have been used to increase the likelihood that professional development would have been immediately

applicable to teaching. Having teachers apply what was learned in PD was, of course, the ultimate goal of all professional development. Making strong connections between what was learned and how to apply it in the teacher's own context was important (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). PD had to be relevant to teachers' work experiences and practitioners needed to build on those experiences in active learning opportunities. Participants could have developed curriculum, materials, and teaching activities, or could have created a plan to incorporate new techniques as part of professional development (Crandall, 1993). PD should have also increased teachers' content knowledge of second language acquisition theory and of the cultures and the languages of students (Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007).

Flexible delivery. Because professional development for teachers of AEAs could have and should have been very specific and because these teachers were often working in multiple locations and might have been quite scattered geographically from each other, flexible formats were important. Online education allowed for participants to become part of a learning community, but be engaged asynchronously, which was important for teachers who might have been working irregular schedules. Online education could have also brought people together who might not geographically have been near each other, but share much in terms of the subject matter they taught, the people they served, and the professional development needs they identified. Technology-assisted professional development could have also eliminated or reduced travel, optimizing financial resources for community-based organizations in remote locations and for all with strained budgets (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010).

Principles of adult education. Just like adult English acquirers, practitioners serving this population wanted to be treated with sensitivity to their needs as adult learners in professional development settings. Special considerations for older adult learners should have

been taken into consideration when appropriate. In some cases volunteers for literacy organizations were adults who had retired from careers in other fields, and these practitioners might have needed special PD considerations because of their advanced ages. Professional development for practitioners serving AEAs needed to be designed according to adult learning principles. Implications included the following principles:

- Connect learning with real world application (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).
- Acknowledge there may be a transition period while learners struggle to reconcile old beliefs with new information. Sometimes this struggle manifests itself in the relationship between student and facilitator (Polson, 1993).
- Build transition/reflection time into instructional design. Adults need time to absorb and incorporate new ideas into existing knowledge and beliefs before they are ready to apply the concepts (Polson, 1993).
- Be sensitive to the needs of older adults whose vision, hearing, or short-term memory may be in decline. Use larger fonts, repeat contributions from participants if all didn't hear, recap previous lessons, *etc.* (Polson, 1993).
- Measure practitioner learning in more than one way. Allow for different learning styles, preferences, strengths, and interests (Polson, 1993).
- Design activities to build success and confidence in participants. Adult learners are sensitive about making mistakes and need to experience success (Zemke & Zemke, 1984). Give examples, model how to complete tasks, help organize information, explain connections, use metaphors, break tasks into manageable steps, repeat information, *etc.* (Polson, 1993).

- Create a sense of community. Create an environment where participants are free to take risks and feel supported by other participants. The PD facilitator should be approachable and friendly (Polson, 1993).
- Consider the physical environment. Provide a comfortable setting for face-to-face meetings. Alter activities to provide for physical needs of participants (Zemke & Zemke, 1984).
- Present a variety of possible theories, philosophies, and ideas for consideration. This will encourage reflection and integration of new ideas with existing knowledge and beliefs (Zemke & Zemke, 1984).
- Design opportunities to include a diverse group for maximum impact. New practitioners can benefit from participation in professional development with coworkers who have many years of experience. In return by asking questions, new practitioners can open discussion and create dialog that encourages experienced professionals to go deeper into the understanding of the craft. Action research groups, peer observations, mentoring, and peer coaching are all activities where co-workers of varying levels of experience can work together for mutual benefit. These activities can be part of professional development design. In peer observation models, both experienced and novice teachers exchange observations so both can benefit from seeing each other at work (Crandall, 1993). In a study of ESL teachers, both observing and observed teachers identified significant benefits and gained insights to improve instruction based on observations in each other's classes. (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Richards & Lockhart, 1994 as cited by Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010).

This synergy could have been expanded further. If PD ideas were used in AEA classrooms and the AEAs in those classrooms were asked for feedback, another layer was added to the PD opportunity. Practitioners could have learned new strategies and then taken them back to their classrooms to try them. Strategies could have been fine-tuned then and reflected upon for continuous improvement. Feedback from students could have been a useful part of reflection and practitioners could have then brought their experiences back to the PD learning community to widen the impact of the learning experience (Crandall, 1993).

This real-world learning environment was enhanced even further if administrators and university professors who were usually somewhat removed from classrooms of English acquirers were involved as well. All could have benefited from the sharing of experiences by both new and experienced practitioners trying new strategies in real-world contexts (Crandall 1994; Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010). According to Crandall, if all of these populations were part of the same learning community,

> TESOL teacher educators and applied linguists would have much-needed authentic adult education contexts in which to test both theory and practice; beginning teachers (regardless of their prior formal education) would be provided with both formal education and opportunities to learn from their experiences; and more experienced teachers could serve as mentors, conduct research related to their own classes and practice, and reflect upon and share their experiences with each other, with their learners and with university colleagues. (1993, p. 512)

- Include significant opportunities for reflection of teaching practices. Reflective and collaborative PD activities would be especially beneficial for experienced teachers (Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010 as cited in Richards & Farrell, 2005). Through professional development activities, experienced teachers seek to affirm the ideas, experiences, and intuitive judgments that they have developed during their careers (Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010). Action research, reflective practice, or researcher-teacher collaborations are helpful professional development formats for this (Crandall, 1993). According to Huberman (1993), these activities also lead to long-term career satisfaction and the development of professional expertise.

  Novice practitioners also benefit from reflective practices. Practitioners can collect and analyze descriptive data, identify and use a new approach in teaching, reflect, and re-evaluate the approach used, collect new data, and create a plan for the future based on the experience. Through this kind of reflective practice, teachers see themselves as researchers engaging in the process of continuous improvement (Crandall, 1993).
- Encourage teachers to become researchers, bringing theory and practice together. According to the CAELA Network and Center for Applied Linguistics (2010), studies indicate that professional development designers need to "[e]ncourage teachers to bring theory, second language acquisition and reading research, and practice together through practitioner research or joint projects between teachers and researchers" (p.xii). Students and practitioners all benefit when practitioners are involved in research and continuous improvement. When practitioners are engaged in research, they often experiment with new materials and methods and they are encouraged to

take risks. As a result, practitioners are invigorated about teaching in new ways (Chisman & Crandall, 2007 as cited in Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010).

- Perform ongoing evaluation to improve the quality of the PD. Just like improving teaching practices in the classroom, professional development offerings need to have evaluation and accountability practices built into them. Data from a variety of sources should be used to plan and construct professional development opportunities. Participant needs and preferences should also be considered. After the goals and content of the professional development offering have been selected, professional development designers can determine how the program will be evaluated (Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007).

Program evaluation could have been approached in a variety of ways and perhaps a combination of approaches was appropriate. Information to be collected for evaluation might have included participant reactions to the experience, evidence of practitioner learning and use of new strategies, evidence of improved AEA performance, and evidence of organizational change. After looking at the collected information and analyzing the effectiveness of the professional development offering, changes could have been made to reflect improvements needed (Schaetzel, Kreeft Peyton, & Burt, 2007). These authors further suggested that having a "critical friend" look at the evaluation data to make suggestions would have been another step one could have taken to improve the quality of professional development opportunities.

Chapter Three: Implications for Effective Professional Development for Practitioners of AEAs

What are the implications, then, for creating professional development opportunities for practitioners serving adult English acquirers? First, professionals need to develop more programs that specifically address the teaching adult learners, and more specifically, adult English acquirers. Teaching adult English acquirers is not the same as teaching children who are acquiring English. Therefore, the professional preparation needs to be different.

Practitioners need to not only be familiar with second language acquisition theory and effective teaching pedagogy, they need to know how to structure activities and choose materials that are appropriate for adults, specifically adult English acquirers. Practitioners need to know how to connect learning objectives with relevant learning activities that will be effective and immediately applicable to the lives of their adult English acquirers. This, of course, requires practitioners to get to know their students--the interests, needs, and goals of the students--and use that information to create customized learning experiences that not only address the learning objectives of the program, but also meet the specific needs of the students. After all, if practitioners aren't meeting the needs of the students, they won't have any students! It is those needs that originally brought the students to the program.

Resources, such as the Wisconsin Alliance for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (WISACALD) website www.wisacald.org, need to be developed to bring accurate, current, and specific information to practitioners on an on-going basis. More research focused on the unique needs of adult English acquirers is needed to advance pedagogical effectiveness in the field.

Finally, PD designers need to structure professional development opportunities that will bring about change in instructional practice. Evaluation tools need to be developed to document

those changes. Administrators need to reconsider using professional development budgets strictly for conferences and two-day workshops and use what research indicates regarding effective professional development to make programming decisions. Program administrators need to find ways to encourage practitioners to pursue professional development and then be sure that the professional development programs are well-designed and will lead to instructional change and effective outcomes for both the participants in professional development and the administrations that sponsor or organize them.

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Appendix A

Professional Development Ideas for Practitioners Serving Adult English Acquirers

Teaching Specific ESL Skills

- Teaching reading (and the connection between reading and all other academic skills)
- Teaching writing (for form and function)
- Teaching speaking (and pronunciation) & listening
- Teaching grammar
- Teaching Vocabulary (and the vocabulary we never teach)

Language Acquisition, The English Language

- Second Language Acquisition theory
- The Language Acquisition Process (L1)
- Professionals Who Have Impacted Our Work (Krashen, Cummins, etc.)
- English structures/ The Technical Aspects of Language
- The Silent Period and Affective Filter Issues

Adult learners

- Teaching older adults
- Adult Learning Principles
- Selecting Appropriate Educational Materials for Adult English Acquirers

Emerging Literacy

- Teaching emerging literacy adults
- The Differences Between Literacy Instruction & Language Acquisition
- How lower levels of education in childhood and low literacy affects students, especially in transitioning to higher education

Creating a Positive Classroom Environment for Adult English Acquirers

- Active learning principles (explore one in depth or an overview)
- To Correct, Recast, or Guide Students through Rephrasing?
- Incorporating Life Experiences in the ESL Classroom
- Supporting the whole student
- Honoring Varied Viewpoints in the ESL Classroom
- Retaining Students: Connecting Their Needs with Program Objectives & Class Activities
- Community Resources to Support AEAs
- The Use of Journaling in the adult ESL Classroom (great tool for reflective thinking & functional writing)
- Creating community and a positive learning environment
- Maximizing Learning Preferences, Learning Styles, & Different Intelligences in the Adult ESL Classroom

- Building the Self-Esteem and Confidence of AEAs in the classroom
- Incorporating the individual goals/ needs of students into Classroom Goals & Activities

Honoring Culture / Cultural Sensitivity

- Honoring the Other Cultures in the Classroom
- Incorporating US Culture and Institutions in Every day Lessons
- Appreciating Multilingualism
- Educational Practices around the World in Elementary and Secondary Education
- Culture, Language and Identity (Becoming "Westernized?")
- When students sabotage their own language acquisition (culture & identity struggles)
- Honoring the life stories of AEAs in the adult ESL classroom
- World Cultural Beliefs/ Perspectives/ Business Practices/ Traditions

Improving Instructional Quality

- Using Summative & Formative Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning
- Daily Lessons Learned- Reflecting on Daily Teaching Practices for Quality Improvement
- Lesson Design – from start to finish
- How to Analyze Students' Work to Provide Effective Feedback
- Using Program data to improve Services
- Improving Instruction through Mentoring, Peer Observations, & Study Circles
- Using native language instruction to improve English proficiency/literacy
- Teaching Multi-Level Groups
- Positive attributes of practitioners serving AEAs
- Comparing English to other Languages & Interlanguage patterns
- Technology that Works in the adult ESL Classroom
- Incorporating Technology Literacy into ESL Instruction at all Levels
- Authentic, relevant, contextualized and applicable: How to Connect Course Objectives with Real Life Applications(workplace English would be part of this)
- Working with adult English Language Acquirers with disabilities
- Helping students access prior knowledge and connect new ideas with existing schema
- Active learning- how much activity is enough and too much?
- Providing feedback- Analyzing student work
- Program Evaluation (using an evaluation tool and local data)

Advocacy

- Laws that Pertain to adult ESL Programming and Instruction
- Immigration Trends in our Nation, State, and Local Area: Implications for our Program
- Misconceptions about Teaching Adult English Acquirers
- How We Get our Funding
- Laws that Pertain to Citizenship, Residency/ The Citizenship Exam & Process
- Student Stories- the remarkable life stories of students in your programs

Transitioning Students to High School Completion programs /Higher Education

- Making content comprehensible in post-secondary education
- Appropriate Transition (to post-secondary) Activities at all Levels of Language Proficiency
- Incorporating higher level thinking into everyday lessons
- Writing Language Objectives for the Content Classroom
- Scaffolding Techniques to Increase Student Success in the Content Classroom
- Helping Content Teachers to Understand How to Help English Language Acquirers
- What Adult English Acquirers Need In Order to Pass the GED/ HSED
- Incorporating Technology Education into Programs for Adult English Acquirers