



Content list available at <http://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir>

***Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research
(Book Review)***



English Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Preservice Teachers' Learning in the Professional Experience, Minh Hue Nguyen. Australia: Springer Nature (2019). 185 pp., ISBN: 978-981-13-9761-5.

Maryam Soleimani ^a, Karim Sadeghi ^{b,*}

^a Farhangiyān University, Iran

^b Urmia University, Iran

English Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Preservice Teachers' Learning in the Professional Experience by Minh Hue Nguyen is an account of current issues on English teacher educators, researchers, curriculum developers, and pre-service teachers, demonstrating an application of sociocultural theory in researching pre-service teacher learning. The bonus with this book is in its extended conversations with pre-service teachers, their mentors, and academics, and their thought-provoking stories about the journeys of becoming teachers in Australia as well as the support inherent in institutional and policy contexts of English language teaching in Australia that influenced their learning.

In addition to a preface and the regular front matter pages, the book is prepared in nine chapters which encompass research studies examining the complex issues of the professional experience in English language teacher education with regard to curriculum design, implementation and professional learning. Furthermore, the sociocultural contexts of the professional experiences, the pre-service teachers as learners of English language teaching, and the process of learning to teach English language in relation to the contextual and personal issues and their interrelationships are discussed in depth.

Chapter 1, *English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in Neoliberal Contexts*, presents an overview of the current status of English language teaching and teacher education in neoliberal contexts. It suggests that it is essential for English language teacher education to take into account challenges (theoretical, practical, and research) so as to prepare the next cohorts of pre-service teachers for working in dynamic and diverse contexts and to recognize the personal diversities that they bring to teacher education which shape their professional learning. The chapter highlights the need for empirical research to examine the complexities and diversities of the contextual and personal dimensions of teacher learning to better inform practice in English language teacher education in these contemporary contexts.

* Corresponding author: Urmia University, Iran

Email address: ksadeghi@urmia.ac.ir

The aim of chapter 2, *Theory, Practice and Research on L2 Teacher Learning and Professional Experience*, is to critically review the contemporary literature on L2 teacher cognition and professional experience, and to highlight a shift in the field towards a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning. The chapter suggests that the practicum is an important part of pre-service TESOL teachers' professional learning, yet it still remains what Crookes (2003) described some 17 years ago as an "undertheorised and underresearched" aspect of second language teacher education (SLTE) (p. 2). The literature reveals that pre-service teachers' emotions and identity are two integral aspects of their professional learning.

A Sociocultural Perspective on Second Language Teacher Learning, in chapter 3, engages with the principal tenets of sociocultural theory and discusses the implications that a sociocultural theoretical framework has for practice and research in English language teaching professional experience. The chapter emphasizes that sociocultural theory is a powerful and broad theoretical framework for professional experience research and practice because it highlights the importance of social interactions and historicity in learning and development. The chapter ends with the methodological details of the research in this book in light of a sociocultural theoretical framework.

Chapter 4, *Curriculum Design and Partnerships in Professional Experience*, presents a case study on the design and delivery of the English language teaching professional experience at a major Australian university. It reveals the roles of different parties including (1) university placement officers, course leaders, and professional experience tutors; and (2) mentors and organizer of teaching practices (OTPs) from schools in supporting pre-service teachers. This chapter offers insights into how pre-service teachers are supported by the university and schools. Moreover, it discusses implications for developing professional experience and partnerships that foster professional growth for pre-service English language teachers and teacher educators.

Chapter 5 entitled, *Mentoring in Professional Experience: A Source of Support*, introduces three major types of mentoring support, namely encouragement of risk-taking and agency, provision of constructive advice and feedback, and provision of productive opportunities for professional learning. In line with the relevant literature (e.g., Nguyen & Parr, 2018), this chapter proposes that mentoring by school-based teachers, if implemented strategically and effectively, can be an essential source of learning for pre-service teachers. The chapter discusses implications for teacher educators, institutions, and schools in creating a supportive professional learning environment for both mentors and pre-service teachers.

In chapter 6, *Mentoring in Professional Experience: A Source of Tensions and Emotions*, the focus is on the negative side of mentoring where unresolved tensions and negative emotions can influence pre-service teachers' learning. The findings highlight the importance of effective communication between mentors and pre-service teachers (Heikkinen et al., 2018) and show that inadequate and ineffective communication between them can be a major cause of the tension experienced. With insights into personal and contextual sources of such tensions and emotions, the chapter discusses implications for research and practice with a view to developing productive professional experience in English language teacher education.

Chapter 7 entitled, *Identity Development in Professional Experience*, reports comprehensive case studies on the professional identity development of three pre-service English language teachers in Australian secondary schools. The chapter reveals the support and challenges inherent in the professional experiences and examines how such support and challenges inhibit and/or facilitate identity development among the pre-service teachers. Moreover, it highlights the essential role of mentor teachers as part of the practicum in shaping the pre-service teachers' professional experiences overall and identity development in particular. The finding suggests that mentoring if

appropriately structured could enhance pre-service professional learning but otherwise could be a source of challenges that hinder productive professional identity development for pre-service teachers. The chapter puts forward recommendations for research on teacher identity and support for pre-service English language teachers in forming productive professional identities.

Chapter 8, *Pedagogical Learning in Professional Experience*, drawing on a sociocultural perspective, examines the personal and social forces that shape pre-service teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools. This chapter suggests that teacher agency plays an essential role in pre-service teachers' pedagogical learning during the practicum; therefore, pre-service teachers should be equipped with pedagogical tools that can be used in a wide variety of teaching contexts (Yang, 2015). This would allow pre-service teachers to be reflective, flexible, and supported in their instructional decision making.

Chapter 9, *Reflection on English Language Teacher Learning in Professional Experience*, summarizes the key ideas of this book and offers recommendations for theory, practice, and research in English language teaching professional experience. From a sociocultural perspective, it highlights the importance of taking into account the personal and social dimensions of professional experience in research and practice. Implications are discussed in terms of developing an effective knowledge base for English language teaching and reconceptualizing the professional experience for more productive professional learning. The chapter ends with directions for future research on professional experience in English language teacher education.

To conclude, this book makes theoretical and practical contributions for English language teaching and the conditions for effective professional experience. In addition, this book reports empirical studies which are among the first to use a sociocultural theoretical framework in exploring the school-based English language teaching professional experience. The sociocultural theoretical framework and its implications for research methodology have enhanced the quality of the data in terms of both depth and breadth. The findings presented here hold practical implications for English language teacher education. The reviewers found the book very well written and well-organized with an outstanding framework that employs an uncomplicated structure and highlights its excellent coverage of the key issues. The writing style is clear and straightforward, making it easy for both practitioners as well as students to follow. All in all, this book could be a valuable resource for prospective and current practitioners in the field of teacher education.

References

- Crookes, G. (2003). *A practicum in TESOL: Professional development through teaching practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heikkinen, H. L. T., Wilkinson, J., Aspfors, J., & Bristol, L. (2018). Understanding mentoring of new teachers: Communicative and strategic practices in Australia and Finland. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 71, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.025>.
- Nguyen, M. H., & Parr, G. (2018). Mentoring practices and relationships during the EAL practicum in Australia: Contrasting narratives. In A. Fitzgerald, G. Parr, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Re-imagining professional experience in initial teacher education* (pp. 87–105). Singapore: Springer.
- Yang, H. (2015). *Teacher mediated agency in educational reform in China*. Cham: Springer.