

'For me as a teacher of teachers this book is a must.'

Charles O. Ongondo, Teacher Educator

# Teaching Teachers

## Processes and Practices

**Angi Malderez** and **Martin Wedell**

# Teaching Teachers

Also available from Continuum

*How to Design a Training Course*, Peter Taylor

*English Language Teacher's Handbook*, Joanna Baker and Heather Westrup

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# Glossary

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**Learners:** the teacher or teachers being supported by ToTs.

**Mentoring:** one-to-one ToTing, most often work-place based, as opposed to ToTing a group of teachers away from their workplace.

**Mentor:** ToT working one-to one with a teacher.

**Mentee:** teacher participant in one-to-one.

**Pupils:** schoolchildren or students in schools or colleges (being taught by the learners whom ToTs teach).

**TL programme:** Teacher Learning programme. These are the types of programmes taught by ToTs and attended by learners.

**ToTs:** teachers of teachers – those who support one or more teachers in their learning ToTing.

**ToTing:** teaching teachers.

**We** the authors (rather than a 'we' intended to include the reader).

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# General Introduction

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## Who this book is for

This book is mainly intended for teachers who are about to adopt or have recently adopted a further role: that of supporting the learning of other future or current teachers. We, of course, hope that more experienced teachers of teachers (ToTs) might also find food for thought or practical ideas in these pages. This 'supporting the learning' of other teachers may involve a range of duties such as:

- being responsible for staff development within the context of a school
- being asked to run a one-off workshop or a longer in-service programme
- starting a new job in an initial teacher preparation programme, or
- agreeing to receive a trainee in their class during the classroom-based elements of their initial teacher qualification programme

In addition, there are a range of other education professionals who may be involved with the provision of programmes for teachers who might find parts of this book helpful. For example, those intending to set up support systems for teachers at a local level during the implementation phases of new regional or national educational initiatives might also find it relevant. Furthermore, while primarily intended for practitioners, this book may also be helpful for those needing to ensure effective dissemination of research findings to teachers, and be a useful addition to reading lists on academic programmes relating to teacher education, educational change and general capacity building in educational development settings.

## Who we are

Why does it matter that you have some idea who we are? We believe it matters for several reasons.

First of all we see writing and reading as a dialogue at a distance. It is hard to have a decent conversation with somebody you do not know at all, since one of the main social reasons for any dialogue on any topic is to identify similarities and differences between yourself and the person you are talking to.

Secondly, in assessing how far you agree or disagree with what you read here, or in understanding why we say what we say, it is helpful for you to have some understanding of the experiences that have led us to say it. In other words you need to know something about the experiences of teaching teachers and reading about and researching teacher learning on which we base the statements we make, in order to help you decide whether or to what extent what we say is convincing.

We hope that, if you disagree with what we say, or find your experience has been very different from ours, you do not throw the book away, but rather, as in the story of the blind men and the elephant (see Chapter 1), remain open to the potential usefulness of a new perspective. Conversely, if you find that what we say does not correspond to what you think, we hope you won't automatically feel that you are 'wrong'. We can only offer one perspective, and would be very glad if you were able to help us get a clearer picture through having access to yours. We have included our email addresses in the final chapter and would be genuinely interested to hear from you.

So after all that, who are we? Together we have forty-plus years' experience of teaching teachers in various parts of the world, on all continents apart from Australasia and North America. Before that, or simultaneously, during the early years of teaching teachers, we were both teachers of English as a Foreign language, in state and private settings overseas and in the UK and have a combined total of about 30 years in this role. We are as you can see not youngsters, (and) while some of you might feel we are out of touch or 'past it', hopefully other readers might find this, our age, reassuring! However, we will also argue that it is not merely years of experience that makes what somebody says trustworthy, but also what they have learned from that experience.

The job we both do now is an academic one, which involves us in researching (in the fields of teacher education – for one of us – and educational change – for the other), as well as in teaching teachers, both on formal accredited programmes and within the context of educational development initiatives in various parts of the world.

### **Why we have written the book**

We have written this book for three main reasons. The first is because teachers (becoming ToTs) with whom we have worked over the past decade have asked us to. During this work neither we, nor they, have been able to find any single, accessible source of ideas and practices to support the initial stages of their work as ToTs. We think the main reason they wanted such a book had to do with their need to feel confident and supported as they tried to make their early experiences of teaching teachers successful. We hope that any of you who are beginning in this role will find that what follows is indeed accessible and supportive of your early experiences.

Secondly, the start of this millennium has coincided with education systems being increasingly seen as a key means of raising citizens' skills levels in order to meet the economic challenges of globalization. Consequently, educational reforms of various kinds are happening within many national education systems. The effective teaching of teachers is *the* key factor influencing the extent to which the effective implementation of new education policies and curriculum reforms takes place as intended. This in turn depends on educational reformers' understanding of what such effective teaching of teachers involves. We hope that this book will also provide a resource for such readers.

Finally, we believe that the effective teaching of teachers is the most efficient form of dissemination for many educational research findings. For reasons which we hope will become clearer in Part 1, simply telling teachers about relevant research findings, whether through writing or lectures/presentations, is unlikely to affect what many or even most of the listeners or readers actually do once back in their classrooms. We therefore believe that issues discussed in this book are of relevance to, for example, university lecturers hoping to disseminate their own or others' research findings through their teaching of teachers on accredited (BA, MA) or non-accredited courses, as well as to those working on educational research projects who genuinely want or need to disseminate findings to teachers.

## What's in the book

As you will see later, we do not believe that either learning to teach, or learning to teach teachers is as simple a matter as doing as you are told or 'applying theories'. So why are we seeming to start this book with a section that deals with, in effect, 'theories'? There are two answers to this question. The first is that what we present in Part 1 we see as conceptual tools to use in the practices of planning and preparing to teach. By conceptual tools we mean practical ways of thinking about your practices as a ToT. The ones we describe here are the ones we use ourselves. Secondly, in any dialogue it is necessary to have a shared language. Therefore through discussing these theories we are developing a linguistic shorthand for sometimes complex ideas which we will be able to use later in the book when, for example, providing a rationale for a particular practice.

Part 2 discusses the sorts of thinking stages and associated activities we go through when undertaking the 'before teaching' processes of designing, planning and preparing both for programmes with groups of teachers and for one-to-one teaching of teachers (what others call 'mentoring'). The example we use is that of a short in-service programme and we refer back to this to illustrate points elsewhere in the book. We have chosen to use a short in-service programme, first because we feel it is likely to be relevant to more readers and secondly for reasons of space. However, we believe that these ways of thinking about our practices as ToTs are also relevant to longer or initial teacher preparation programmes.

Because we believe that our core practice as ToTs is as much about our own learning as it is about how we behave in our actual teaching, Part 3 is concerned both with ways ToTs can manage their own learning to become more effective

## **xiv** *General Introduction*

managers of others' learning, and with actual teaching behaviour. In this way we see this Part as the next stage in a process, a chronological sequence of practices going from designing, planning and preparing (Part 2) to actual teaching.

Part 4 deals with the final practices in this sequence: assessment and evaluation. Here we consider some of the issues, difficulties and challenges in assessing the learners on programmes, and in evaluating programmes and those who teach on them.

At the end of each Part we make a few suggestions for some additional readings which expand, explain or exemplify ideas discussed in the Part. We explain which sections we feel are relevant and why we have chosen them. Many of these sources inevitably come from our own language education background. However, we hope that you are not put off by the 'language' in the titles, as we have chosen readings that we think are of relevance to teachers of any subject (including 'teaching').

## **Ways of using the book**

### **If you are a (new) teacher of teachers**

We start with a section called *Preparing Yourself* (Part 1), because preparing your own thinking is crucial to your ultimate effectiveness (for reasons we explain in the section itself), and because in the remainder of the book we draw on ideas introduced here. This, in some ways, is quite a complex section and there are two reasons why you might not want to read through all of it initially.

#### *If you are in a hurry*

If you are in a hurry and working at a particular stage of the sequence outlined above, you may want to go straight to the relevant Part/chapter. We do, though, suggest you visit Part 1 as soon as you can and perhaps even revisit it after your early experiences of teaching teachers, when you may find it makes a new and different sense. In other words, although we hope this book is one which can be dipped into as and when needed, there is quite a bit of cross-referencing within it, and so a quick read from beginning to end would help you to understand some of the important connections that we try to make.

#### *If you get stuck*

Some readers may 'get stuck' while reading Part 1. In this case we suggest you move on to Part 2 and return to specific sections of Part 1 as they are referred to in later chapters. When you have completed the book, and perhaps had a little experience of *ToTing*, you may find Part 1 is more accessible.

## **If you are involved in instigating educational reforms at a national or local level**

While Part 2 of the book may seem of most immediate relevance, this is based on ideas introduced in Part 1. It may also seem less urgent to consider assessment and evaluation (Part 4); however, decisions made very early on in the designing/planning sequence impact on these practices, and choices made about the means of assessment/evaluation in turn influence design decisions. Finally, although you may not be personally involved in the teaching of teachers and Part 3 may appear less relevant, understanding what is involved in becoming, being and growing as an effective ToT may also influence aspects of your designs or plans.

## **If you are involved in dissemination of educational research findings**

One of the principal audiences for the dissemination of educational research findings is teachers. Such dissemination may take place on accredited courses, or through other, frequently one-off, types of events. However, exposure to findings does not in itself guarantee practical impact: the manner in which teachers are exposed to findings matters. This book suggests one perspective on why it matters, as well as an approach to teaching teachers in more transformative ways.

## **If you are responsible for an academic course on teacher education**

This text is not written in a conventionally academic style, since it is aiming at a practitioner (whole-mind, rather than simply d-mode – see Part 1) readership. Nonetheless, we feel it could prove a useful text on courses about teacher education for three reasons: it provides an overview of the stages in the practical provision of teacher education; it provides a source of starter references for a range of fields within the area; and, because it is designed for a practitioner readership, it potentially provides a bridge to more academic study for practitioner students.

## **If you are in a development group with other ToTs**

Part 3 makes explicit suggestions about a range of activities that your group might find useful. Among these is a ‘reading group’, and this text, or sections of it, might be the focus of one or more of these sessions.

## **What we mean by ‘teachers’ (of teachers)**

In the Glossary we have listed some of the terms we will frequently use in this book. Part 1 also introduces key language (and the ideas behind that language)



that we will use in subsequent Parts. However, before we start that we want to say something about what we mean by one fundamental word that it is very easy for everyone to assume they understand. This is the word *teacher*. When you hear or read this word, what do you think of? What immediately springs to mind? All over the world, this word is understood, at least by people not in the profession, in very similar ways, although details may be different according to context. For most people, a teacher works in a room and talks to a number of (usually younger) people who listen and 'learn'; a teacher is in charge, is more powerful than the listeners; a teacher 'knows more' than the listeners; a teacher, not the listeners, makes decisions about what happens in the room, and about whether the listeners now know what has been 'taught'. And so on. Most of this is *not* what we mean when we use the word 'teacher' (and teach and teaching) throughout this book. Rather, by teacher we mean someone who provides learners with opportunities for learning (and in the process learns themselves), plans with 'learning promotion potential' in mind (Tomlinson 1995\*); accepts that the learners already 'know' a lot which will be useful to the learning endeavour; notices the stages learners have reached, and the successes and difficulties the learners are having and uses this to guide decisions about how best to be supportive. What these two descriptions share is a view of the teacher as a person whose job it is to enable others' learning to occur. The two views differ greatly, however, in their descriptions of what teachers do to support learning, which in turn suggests two very different underlying views of learning.

We recognize that the way we have described our meaning of 'teacher' and 'teaching' is frequently found in articles, books and lectures relating to contemporary ideas about education including teacher education (often using terms such as 'facilitator', or 'trainer' for example). In choosing to use the terms 'teacher' and 'teaching' in talking about ToTs and what they do we are reclaiming the central meaning of teacher as a promoter of learning. Although as we have said the literature describes, for example, what teacher educators/facilitators/trainers might be like and what they might do in very general terms, it is rare to find practical detail on what this might mean for the process and practices of teaching teachers (ToTing). We hope that this book will help demonstrate the sorts of activities that a ToT who shares our view of what a teacher is and does, can practically engage in (when thinking, designing, planning, preparing and then actually teaching, assessing and evaluating) to make the rhetoric reality.

In discussing what we mean by the word 'teacher' we have already begun one of the main preparatory tasks that a ToT needs to undertake – that is, working out what they think and why. Part 1, therefore, which introduces various ideas about, for example, the possible goals of teacher learning and processes which might lead to their achievement, will also we hope serve as a tool to help you explore your own thinking.

\* See References, p. 40.

Part 1

# Preparing Yourself

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## Introduction

### Preparing your own thinking: why it matters

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In trying to answer the question implied above about why it matters how you think, we'd like to start with a couple of stories about our early experiences which you may find more or less similar to your own.

#### Story 1

*In the summer of 1969, when I was nineteen years old, I got a job teaching English on a summer school for young adults. I soon discovered that just being a native speaker of the language was not enough. First of all, there were ways in which I didn't know the language at all: I had to work hard to find ways of describing to myself how it worked and how it was made up, as well as on deciding what parts of that description I would use with my students. To start with, not very consciously I used, or tried to use, ways of working I remembered my language teachers using with me. I eventually discovered that these were not meeting the hopes and expectations of my paying and very vocal learners, and I was very bored. I searched in the growing mass of textbooks and supplementary materials for new ideas. This, however, caused me new problems. I realized I didn't really know why I was selecting what I was to use apart from a belief that the activities might keep my learners temporarily happy and engaged. I needed to be able to convince them, and myself, that what I chose for them to do would actually help them learn and, to do this, I needed to understand much, much more about strategies, processes and conditions which support language learning. In order to do this I went off and got myself a string of TESOL qualifications, each of which made me realize that there was yet more to know!*

#### Story 2

*Some years and lots of learning later (with and for my students as well as on courses), my students were generally happy and their results were good. I was asked to work on*