1 *Organization and Goals*

- What should the content of a practicum-related course be?
- Are goals important in professional development?

Warm-up
Write down one goal you have for your development as a teacher, then share it with another developing teacher.

We don't always consciously seek out the things that most affect our development as teachers. Some of the things that have made me grow as a teacher have been my failures. Accidents can help, too – I have often not sought a particular book on a topic I needed help with, but encountered it by chance. But I think there is a lot to be said for having goals. In this chapter I have one major aim in mind: to encourage or help you to set at least tentative goals for a period of professional development focusing on teaching practice and what underpins it. Since this book is intended to support your attainment of such goals, let me first comment on the content, organization, and tone of the chapters that follow, so that they can be helpful in terms of your goals.

Elements and organization of a course to accompany practice teaching

The program of study and reflection implied by this book can be conceptualized as relating to "those skills and values useful in developing as an ES/FL teacher which cannot be assigned to specific conventional parts of ES/FL teaching." This eliminates from separate consideration the so-called four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and also those areas of content or disciplinary knowledge that form the core of applied

linguistics or second language studies and their source disciplines of psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. Which leaves: what you do to be an ES/FL teacher, in the classroom and outside it; how you work with your colleagues, your school, and your society; and how you base this, as a reflective human being, in your values and beliefs. Values and personal growth, then, form part of the curriculum for ES/FL teacher development, in my opinion, and they appear as part of the content and intent of this book. (Though not always emphasized in TESOL teacher education, they have a long history elsewhere.[1]) And finally, this book also includes attention to the processes and prerequisites for continuing professional development, both institutional and personal, beyond the formal practicum itself.

The material of this course is presented in a linear sequence, and has the authoritative form of the written word. Rather than necessarily following its sequence, and rather than accepting its authority, however, I suggest you be "strategic" in engaging with it. Depending on your level of experience, some of it may be more and some of it less useful to you; and your working contexts may make some of the ideas discussed here more easily applicable than others. What use you make of it will not only depend on your present development as a teacher, but also how you see yourself developing, which is likely to be guided to some extent by your goals. Though some cultures may place more emphasis than others on the learners' own goals being a driving force for his/her learning, the possibility that you have broad goals for a period of professional development seems likely. I think it is important to articulate them, but first, let us briefly review the topic of goals itself. We could look at goals from a variety of perspectives (philosophical or cultural, for example), but I will simply take a few points from the understanding of goals provided by psychological research (recognizing that it may include cultural perspectives itself). I then go on to specific exemplars of how goals have been referred to in teacher development.

Goals

Older psychological research identified goals as having a variety of positive effects on learning. It investigated the topic of goals from three main viewpoints: the characteristics of goals (such as their specificity), their content (personal, social, etc.), and the individual's orientation to goals of different types (challenge on the one hand versus grades on the other; see Schutz, 1994, for review). A wide range of social science research on goal-setting

is reviewed in Baumeister, et al. (1994, p. 62; see also Locke & Latham, 1990; Walker & Quinn, 1996), from which I extract the following:

> Both long-range and short-term goals are valuable for effective self-management. Having long-term goals is important for orienting oneself and providing continuity across one's efforts . . . [cf. e.g.] De Volder and Lens (1982). Long-range goals may help one transcend the immediate situation and its unpleasant demands or distracting temptations. Long-range goals alone can be daunting, however . . . Bandura & Schunk (1981) showed the benefits of having proximal . . . as well as distal goals. People who pursued a set of proximal goals gained a sense of self-efficacy by the fact that they were frequently approaching and reaching these goals. In that way, they avoided the discouragement that comes from seeing how remote one's ultimate, long-range goals are . . . Thus, it is most helpful to have both proximal and distal goals. Manderlink and Harackiewicz (1984) found that distal goal setting increased people's intrinsic motivation, whereas proximal goal setting led to more positive expectations for success. People who have both types of goals will tend to enjoy the benefits of having a long-term plan that structures their activities and provides a continuous source of motivation, as well as receiving the encouraging feedback of making progress toward these goals.

We probably should see this work as providing useful evidence that goal-setting does help adults succeed in doing tasks, including learning, and that it also helps them develop personally and professionally. At the same time, I would suggest that this line of research included a general, largely unexamined assumption, that "self-directed behavior" is universally needed to achieve academic success, as well as success elsewhere in life. That is, this work takes as axiomatic the idea that individuals independently choose goals for themselves and direct their energies toward them, in a largely independent manner. While this may be true for adults in the dominant cultures of Europe and North America, it may not do justice to cultures where people are more interdependent. Nevertheless, it can provide a jumping-off point for this discussion.

Let us get closer to home now, and consider goals in the context of teacher development. In the area of teacher development, what procedures are used or have been advocated for goal-setting? Good and Brophy (1987, p. 531) emphasize a focus on explicit behaviors. "Make explicit plans," they say, continuing,

> Teachers who attempt to improve their teaching must be able to decide what they want to do and how to determine if their plans are working. Too often, our halfhearted New Year's resolutions are never acted upon because they are vague. Resolutions such as . . . "I want to be a more enthusiastic teacher" are seldom accomplished simply because they are not concrete suggestions that guide behavior.

They would recommend a more explicit goal – in this case, " 'I want to tell students why a lesson is important before it begins and model my sincere interest in the content' " (p. 531). Presumably it is possible to be explicit without being behavioral.

However, Duke (1990), on the basis of a one-year project on teacher goal-setting in the context of professional development, reports that the teachers he worked with (in U.S. mainstream education) had considerable difficulty setting goals. They were not accustomed to setting goals for their professional growth, and it was necessary to devote considerable time and energy to designing exercises and providing a supportive, collaborative environment in order to make this possible.

Courses for teacher development probably should, then, encourage participants to reflect on their goals. Here is an example of how a text in this area does so: Posner (1996, p. 17) encourages preservice teachers about to have their first experience with the field to articulate their concerns as well as identify goals:

EXERCISE 2.2 Expressing personal goals and priorities
People's goals affect their actions, expectations, and perceptions, even (and maybe especially) when they are unaware of these goals. Expressing goals makes their examination possible, thereby providing an opportunity for reassessment.

Write a few sentences describing how you expect to benefit from your field experience . . .

Now look at what you have written. You might want to compare your goals with the following generic goals:

1. To find out what teaching is really like (i.e., career exploration)
2. To see if I like teaching (i.e., exploring personal preferences)
3. To see if I can really do it (i.e., self-testing)
4. To learn some skills and modify certain habits and characteristics (i.e., training)
5. To develop my own approach or style (i.e., personal style)
6. To apply what I've learned in college to real students and to real classrooms (i.e., theory into practice).

Despite my caveat concerning the older psychological research in this area, we may note that the possibility of this sort of practice in teacher education is not confined to "Western" countries. For example, Kwo (1996, p. 314) reports on one Hong Kong EFL preservice teacher education course that began by way of a questionnaire given to students including the following:

1. *Orientation*
- Why have you chosen to do [this] . . . program? (In considering your career, what are your options?)

- What do you see as essential qualities of a teacher which you are striving to develop? (List them and describe role models, if any)
- What do you expect from the . . . course? (What would you like to be the objectives of the course?)

A sort of compromise between the idea that goals for a period of learning may be set by the learner, and the idea that they should be set by the teacher, can occur if teachers-in-development are encouraged to specify their goals while being aware of an instructor's. Here, to exemplify this, is a quote from a recent syllabus (of mine) designed for use with the present book:

> Participants will develop their own goals for the course. Past goals (developed by me, with input from successive groups of students) included the aim that participants develop
>
> 1. a conceptual map for SL teaching techniques which are not skill-area specific
> 2. their conscious understanding of the processes of SL teaching
> 3. their ability to reflect on their use of classroom teaching procedures and lesson planning
> 4. a critical stance towards the components of teacher education contained in the practicum.
>
> I'd like to see you articulate your own goals and share them with the class.

In using this remark in a syllabus, I assume that my students (like you, the reader) are motivated professional adults, and thus might prefer to choose goals for themselves, or at least jointly negotiate them, rather than merely accepting those imposed on them by administrative structures and the instructor. At the same time, given the work of Duke just mentioned, it is probably advisable for us to devote time and thought to the matter of goal-setting, rather than take it for granted. And of course, experiences themselves, even if not driven by goals, are important and valuable, too.

YOU TRY IT ...

If you are using this book in connection with a period of teaching practice or some other form of professional development, try to determine some goals for yourself that you will aim at during this time. You may wish to use Posner's example as a basis, though remember he is addressing the preservice student teacher.

In developing a goal or goals, here are some things to bear in mind:

1. Obviously, you must make sure your goal makes sense. You must believe in the rationality or appropriateness of your goal.

2. For some goals, such as long-term life goals, you may find it helpful to visualize what it would look like to attain that goal.
3. Writing a goal down (in a literate culture) is said to enhance one's sense of commitment to it; and sharing it or divulging it to others may increase this further (cf. Shell, 1999).

If possible, share these goals with other teachers and your instructor. How do your goals compare with those in Posner's, Kwo's, or my extracts? Are your goals more specific, or more abstract; are they more long-term, or more immediate? If you are one of a group of teachers using this book, what differences are to be found among the goals of the group – can any of those differences be related to the amount of teaching experience already accumulated or the circumstances of that teaching experience?

Student teachers comment . . .

Here is (my reduction of) what a group of participants in an ES/FL practicum class I ran had to say when first pressed to report their goals.

Several students specified the fairly obvious goal of developing as a teacher (to "improve," to be "competent," "to further my education," and "to become a more reflective teacher"), and then went on to specify in more detail what they meant, or some of the things this implied for them. For example, one student teacher wanted to develop an experiential approach during the course of the practicum.

> [My] main goal is to improve as a teacher, and thereby improve my teaching. To me, this means making learning more enjoyable and interesting for my students (and, by extension, more effective), and that's why a more experiential approach is something I'd like to attempt. This is the way I think I would like to learn another language (or anything, for that matter). . . . So, yes, what I need is to get a few books on the subject, find out in more detail what it involves, and try to work it into my lessons. Yes, I can see this as one of my goals for the course.

Several teachers mentioned getting clearer about their own views. This could be with regard to methodological principles:

> I feel my teaching approach (style) tends to be a potpourri of techniques and philosophies that I read or hear about, there is no continuity or structure. I'm not consistent at all and this disturbs me greatly.

Or a philosophical principle: one student wanted to explore the implications of

> one of the greatest Japanese scholars, Takeji Hayashi [who] said that teaching is equal to learning.

And one typical target for clarity is:

I'd like to be able to articulate my teaching philosophy.

An important point made by one *experienced* teacher concerned choice of perhaps *new* goals:

I believe a lot of what I am going through here is the result of lack of experience with these particular skill areas and perhaps these particular learners (here I mean ESL vs. EFL). At my former school . . . I could teach any aspect of the curriculum to any level of student . . . and I had enough experience in this domain and enough knowledge of the student population to effectively create a learning experience that I knew would be successful. The change of skill area and of student population has brought me back to stage one – that of discovering what and how to teach and also how to make it work. In order to grow as a teacher, I requested these skill areas, so I have no one to blame but myself.

For several less experienced teachers, a goal was simply to see how it was to be a teacher. One wrote,

I've been a student for such a long time and this is going to be the first time that I participate in a language classroom as a teacher. The simple fact that I am no longer one of the students in class makes me excited about discovering a new aspect of myself as a person.

In some cases, a crossover or interplay appeared between goals my student teachers had for their own students and goals they had for themselves:

the more immediate classroom goals which allow you to guide the education of your students and the long range goals associated with "self actualization" are both integral part of being an educator.

And again

My goals for this course are to learn how to develop clear, concise, and reachable goals for myself and my students.

Finally, a valuable questioning of the goal orientation is offered by one student:

Whenever I am asked to state what my personal goals are, I don't really know how to respond . . . I don't want to give the impression that I'm indecisive . . . but personally I think my discomfort with stating goals stems from my personal philosophy. . . . I don't really believe that it is always necessary to develop a set of goals. I have found that sometimes not knowing where you're going to go, or not striving for a certain destination, can be quite fruitful. It's sort of like trusting that the process will lead to its own destination.

Understanding your curricular context

When teachers are also learners (as in any instance of teacher development), they have the possibility of turning their experience of learning to use in reflecting on their teaching. Not all adult learning can inform, say, the teaching of a second language to high school students, of course. But in some cases there is the possibility of heightened awareness, if not transfer. Sometimes this sort of thing is referred to as "double-loop learning" (Woodward, 1991). A classic example in the ES/FL context might be when teachers learn about implementing group work via an experience of learning using groups (as opposed to receiving a lecture on the topic).

If now I make some effort to heighten your awareness concerning the pedagogical context of a focus on learner goals, your own teacher development process may be more efficient, and the utilizability of the experience in your own teaching may also be enhanced. Therefore, it may be of use to consider some of the historical and conceptual strands of thought in curriculum and pedagogy involved in a shift from a position in which the teacher sets goals unilaterally, to one in which goals might be the subject of discussion between teacher and student.

In the dominant model of educational course planning used in post-secondary institutions in the 2000s (in my part of the world), course goals are generally made explicit. For elementary and secondary schools they may be set by curriculum experts or a ministry of education; in the post-secondary sector they are often set by the instructor or the institution.[2] Having explicit goals is considered good practice, as it makes the success of the course to some extent open to evaluation: were the goals met? Very detailed procedures for having experts (teacher or curriculum specialists) deriving and specifying curricular and course goals have become a central feature of mainstream curriculum theory over the past 50 years (at least in the English-speaking world), though widely established in practice perhaps only in the last twenty.[3]

Positions contrary to this, curricular orientations which allow student autonomy or choice, have coexisted in western education systems with these just-mentioned more hierarchical and authoritarian arrangements at least since the Romantic movement of the eighteenth century (Shotton, 1993). They appear with more prominence at different times and places. In the United States, they were associated with the progressive movement in the 1930s; more recently, in many countries and across all age ranges they were temporarily prominent in the 1960s (Della-Dora & Blanchard, 1979). While this position has often been associated with more radical philosophies of education, such as libertarian (Smith, 1983) or alternative

education (Kozol, 1982) or critical pedagogy (Crookes & Lehner, 1998), the basic idea seems firmly established, and far less radical, in professional and in-service forms of education. Here one may find, for example, the "learning contract" widely used (in which students contract for a specific grade in exchange for specific amounts of study: Boak, 1998).

Some of these ideas have been incorporated under the heading of social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) at the curricular level:

> In this social constructivist view, curriculum is constructed within the social context of the classroom or school. It has been, and is being, enacted or experienced through teachers' and students' joint negotiation of context and meaning . . . In viewing curriculum in this way, the enactment of individual lessons can be seen to be an important unit of curriculum, and the curriculum as socially constructed events in which teachers and students engage to negotiate different aspects of the curriculum, including topics to be included, ways of approaching them, goals, and means of assessment (Feldman, 1996, n.p.).[4]

In addition, in the wider TES/FL world, there has been a tradition of pedagogy and curriculum (e.g., Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1980; Littlejohn, 1983; Tudor, 1996) coming under the heading of learner autonomy, which has over at least twenty years (and was? awkward possibly influenced by the many social changes in Western Europe in the 1960s) argued for the importance of the learner as an individual in charge of his/her learning.

Finally, a third strand should be acknowledged: adult education, with its theoretical tradition of "andragogy" (Knowles, 1982). This recognizes, to a much greater degree than does mainstream (child) pedagogy, the often self-directed and autonomous nature of the way adults learn in the real world. The expectations and capacities they consequently bring to the classroom can lead to greater use of interactive and nonlinear forms of program design (Kowalski, 1988; cf. Brookfield, 1985, 1986; Mezirow, 1991; Rajal, 1983). These ideas also relate to the overlapping domain of professional education, of which teacher education is a prominent subcategory (Eraut, 1994).

Of course, on the other hand, it is clear that these ideas, which are by no means dominant in Western educational systems, are also even less common in non-Western systems (cf. Polio & Wilson-Duffy, 1998).

FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you are presently teaching an EFL or ESL course, has a needs analysis been used as the basis for establishing course goals? If not, on what basis are they set, and why?

2. Under what circumstances do you set goals for yourself? How do you achieve them, and what support do you use or make use of to do this?
3. Under what conditions, if any, do you think it could be desirable for your students to contribute to determining the goals for a course you might be teaching?
4. I believe that the teacher should at least consider to what extent s/he wishes to share the institutionally-assigned authority to set goals with students; and also, to what extent, if any, institutional pressures and cultural expectations might allow this. In a minority of cases, the teacher will be in a setting where there is a tradition of allowing students input in this area, but my guess is that in the majority of cases, the student teacher will find the administrative system unaccustomed to such initiatives, and the students likewise. What is your situation? What options are available to you? How does your situation compare with other teachers?