

Teaching Philosophy Statements: In-Service ESL Teachers' Practices and Beliefs

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In North American higher education settings, faculty are increasingly required to write teaching philosophy statements. In the field of English language teaching, there is a very narrow understanding of language teachers' practices of writing teaching philosophy statements and their potential benefits to individuals and to the professionalization of the field. The present study examined the practices and beliefs of in-service English as a second language (ESL) teachers toward the genre of teaching philosophy statements. A total of 197 ESL teachers, primarily from intensive English programs (52%) and college/university ESL-based program (35%), completed a 42-item questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions to elicit general information about their own teaching philosophy statements (i.e., format and contents) and their beliefs about the benefits of this practice. The findings led to the identification of preferred formats as well as core topics to include, such as personal beliefs about language learning and teaching, teaching approaches, and teachers' roles in education. Furthermore, there was strong evidence that these in-service ESL teachers value the ongoing practice of drafting their teaching philosophy statements for bureaucratic and reflective purposes. The article concludes with suggested guidelines for ESL teachers working worldwide who want to write their teaching philosophy for reflective and professional reasons.

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Faculty members across a number of fields are likely to produce a written teaching philosophy (TP). This practice, which has gained momentum in the last decades, is often endorsed by university administrations and faculty development offices to

secure teaching positions and develop teaching skills (Chism, 1997–1998; Peters, 2009). TPs also serve as a vehicle for reflecting on teaching for formative purposes. In the field of English language teaching (ELT), teacher educators are increasingly advocating for a reflective approach to second language (L2) teaching because articulating one’s beliefs may lead to more critical examinations of the enactment of pedagogical practices (Farrell, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2011).

Although producing a TP appears to be a common practice, some question its value. For example, TPs are criticized for lacking standards in format and content (Pratt, 2005) and are not always taken seriously by employers (Montell, 2003b). Some of this criticism, however, may be attributed to the ambiguous functions of this genre. In other words, should TPs be conceived as bureaucratic documents written for the purpose of securing and/or maintaining a teaching position or as formative documents intended to promote reflection of deeply engrained beliefs about education? Although some argue that TPs are superfluous and serve, at best, bureaucratic functions, I argue that a TP is a valuable document to be written and revised over time to satisfy both of these purposes. Interestingly, there is limited research stemming from the field of ELT to guide the writing process and I began to suspect that other mentors experienced similar issues when teaching about this occluded genre (Swales, 1996). Thus, developing a more transparent understanding of this practice could benefit English as a second language (ESL) teachers and their mentors. In addition, there is a narrow understanding of how in-service ESL teachers view this genre. The present study was guided by the need to identify first the trends in ELT in terms of the major components that make up ESL teachers’ TPs and then the beliefs of this group toward TPs. This was accomplished by analyzing what in-service ESL teachers report including in their TP and their views toward TPs. The specific research questions were as follows:

1. What features and formats make up in-service ESL teachers’ TP?
2. What topics do in-service ESL teachers report including in their TP?
3. What are in-service ESL teachers’ beliefs about TPs?

Based on the findings from this study, the article concludes with suggested guidelines on how to write a TP.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHIES CONCEPTUALIZED

If educators are required to produce written TPs, it is important that this genre be conceptualized. Schönwetter, Sokal, Freisen, and Taylor (2002), working with faculty in Canadian higher education settings, define a TP as “a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional contexts” (p. 84). Crookes (2003) maintains that TPs should answer questions regarding how to teach, how to treat students, and what roles to play in the classroom. He admonishes that they should go beyond simplistic statements of their preferred teaching methodologies and should not seek to merely resolve problems of teaching. A TP needs to emerge as a result of a deep examination of values, belief systems, and educational experiences in connection with social and educational contexts. In sum, TPs should entail an exploration of the socially constructed ideals stemming from Western and non-Western philosophies as well as the ethics that inform practices. Although TPs may ultimately be shared with potential employers, they are intended to help teachers reach an understanding of their personal values and discuss their global philosophy of education.

Key Components

Both preservice and in-service teachers from various fields struggle with the process of drafting TPs (Crookes, 2003; Korn, 2012; Montell, 2003a). As an occluded genre (Swales, 1996), TP models and explicit instructions are scarce. The following discussion, drawing primarily on research from higher education settings where TPs serve administrative functions, reviews key aspects considered essential in a TP.

There appear to be some recommendations: Acceptable lengths of a TP tend to range between one and two pages (Coppola, 2002) and the use of the first person pronoun is preferred (Coppola, 2002; Korn, 2012). Kearns and Subiño Sullivan (2011) identified a preference for traditional, five-paragraph essay formats. Coppola

(2002) conducted an analysis of TPs in the United States and found that they may include a title, a quote, a thesis statement, and a summary statement. However, there is evidence that some of the writers preferred to use more creative formats. Goodyear and Allchin (1998) found that some U.S.-based faculty preferred poems, songs, or images. Such creativity may have a lasting impact on the readers, but it may also be judged more harshly when submitted for summative purposes because it does not conform to the traditional genres often found in academia.

Empirical research in higher education contexts also provides insights regarding features that increase the successfulness of TPs. Drawing on the perspective of search committee chairs, Meizlish and Kaplan (2008) uncovered five features: evidence of practice, evidence of student-centered teaching, reflectiveness and thoughtfulness, testimony that teaching is valued, and clarity. Less successful statements failed to provide evidence of practice and included trendy buzzwords. Kearns and Subiño Sullivan (2011) also suggest including a discussion of learning and teaching assessment along with learning goals and teaching methods. In summary, there is growing evidence in the context of higher education that there are general content and format expectations.

Benefits and Criticisms of Writing a TP

Although some question the value in writing a TP (especially when imposed upon teachers; Cassuto, 2013; Montell, 2003b), it can be a valuable reflective activity (Coppola, 2002; Crookes, 2003; Goodyear & Allchin, 1998; Schönwetter et al., 2002). In L2 teacher education, embracing a reflective approach to teaching contributes valuable information to teachers' knowledge bases (Farrell, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2011) and should be promoted in preparation courses (Farrell, 2012). Adopting a reflective stance can engage individuals in subjecting "their own beliefs of teaching and learning to critical examinations, by articulating these beliefs and comparing these beliefs to their actual classroom practices to see if there are any contradictions between practice and underlying beliefs" (Farrell, 2007, p. 9). Reflecting on the relationship between actions and beliefs, which is what teachers (think they) do and why and how teachers (think they) do it, should occur early in

their professional training (Crookes, 2003; Richards & Farrell, 2011). As Crookes (2003) explains, it is especially important in L2 teaching contexts because “as specialists in cultural boundary crossing, we spend much of our professional lives in situations or working with materials in which values, beliefs, cultures, or philosophies may disagree or conflict” (p. 45). Through a reflective approach where world views and values are examined, instructors may find greater facility in articulating their overall philosophy of L2 teaching.

The sources of what teachers value and know are multifaceted. Thus, writers should engage in various tasks to foster reflection about their beliefs in a systematic and coherent way and that lead to a deeper understanding of the “historical inheritances” of their teaching context (Crookes, 2003, p. 62). Previous studies examined the benefits of reviewing audio and video recordings of a mini-lesson, keeping a teaching journal and/or a language learning journal, describing critical incidents, and identifying teaching maxims (Farrell, 2007, 2014; Payant, 2014; Richards, 1996; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Writing a TP should be added to the repertoire of reflective activities, especially for preservice teachers.

A second benefit to encouraging preservice teachers to write a TP is professional growth. For example, Kearns and Subiño Sullivan (2011) maintain that, through a carefully crafted and implemented TP, educators can experience greater satisfaction. They claim that having a guiding philosophy can lead to better prepared and effective classes, thereby becoming “better” teachers.

A third benefit of writing a TP is transparency of pedagogical practices. Goodyear and Allchin (1998) propose that teachers should share their beliefs with their students so that students can appreciate the *whats* and *whys* of their pedagogical practices. Students may become more engaged, understand their own roles, and experience increased retention. This may be of significant importance for ELT because learners and teachers navigate between linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Despite these benefits, there are some who question the usefulness of this practice. One such argument against TPs is that they appear to lack standardization (Cassuto, 2013). Others argue, however, that providing strict guidelines may stifle individual

approaches and creativity (Clay, 2007). Interestingly, even these proponents of creativity see value in having standard formats for evaluation. Perhaps the greatest issue relating to written TPs is that, although they are often mandatory in gate-keeping events, they are not always taken seriously by the gate-keepers. Montell (2003b), for example, found various academics who could not recall using a TP as a tool to select candidates for a position.

To summarize, the practice of writing a TP can be a mandated document and/or may provide an opportunity for educators to reflect on their contextualized pedagogical values. Drawing on previous work conducted primarily in the context of North American higher education, there are some expectations underlying the components and format of a TP. In ELT, however, I have not yet identified studies that report on ESL teachers' practices and their beliefs regarding TPs' potential benefits and drawbacks. Given the growing discussion of the professionalization of the field of L2 education and reflective teaching practices, it is necessary that we closely examine this genre. The goals of the present study were twofold: first, to identify the critical components that make up TPs from a pool of in-service ESL teachers and, second, to explore their beliefs toward TPs.

METHOD

Participants

During the 2-month period in which the survey was available online, 197 respondents who had earned a graduate degree in TESOL (or a closely related degree) completed the questionnaire in its entirety. Of the 197, 130 respondents (97 females and 33 males) reported having a written TP (see Table 1). The majority of the respondents were female ($n = 152$ or 77.1%). The pool of participants represented four age groups: 31.5% were 25–34 years of age, 24% were between 35 and 44, 19% were between 45 and 54, and 26% were 55 and above.

Most respondents had obtained a graduate degree from a U.S.-based institution ($n = 166$ or 84.2%) and were currently residing in the United States ($n = 166$ or 84.2%). The majority of the

TABLE 1. Participant Profiles

Age	Female				Male				Total	%
	Yes		No		Yes		No			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
25–34	31	15.7	13	6.6	12	6.1	6	3.0	62	31.5
35–44	24	12.2	16	8.1	6	3.0	1	0.5	47	23.9
45–54	16	8.1	12	6.1	8	4.1	1	0.5	37	18.8
55+	26	13.2	14	7.1	7	3.6	4	2.0	51	25.9
Total <i>N</i>	97	49.2	55	27.9	33	16.8	12	6.1	197	100

respondents taught either in an ESL college or university setting (32.5%) or in an intensive English program (IEP; 31%). Also, 18% reported teaching in both IEP and ESL settings. Only 2.5% were teaching in an English as a foreign language (EFL) setting and only 2% in K–12.

Instrument and Procedure

The questionnaire used as the data collection tool consisted of four sections: (1) general information, (2) practices involved in producing a TP, (3) beliefs about TPs, and (4) demographic data (see the Appendix). Section 1 consisted of a single true-false item: “I have a written TP.” Respondents who answered *true* continued with Section 2, whereas respondents who answered *false* immediately advanced to Section 3. Sections 2 and 3 included Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and true-false items. Sections 2 and 3 also each had four open-ended questions that asked for follow-up details. These open items provided deeper insights regarding the respondents’ views toward this document. The questionnaire was piloted with five in-service ESL teachers.

The final version of the questionnaire included 42 questions and was distributed online via SurveyMonkey[®]. The questionnaire was published on three TESOL Interest Section listservs: IEP, English for Specific Purposes, and Teacher Education.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire included primarily closed-ended questions: Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and true-false items. Given the small

sample size, only descriptive statistics are reported for these items. Specifically, percentages were tabulated to show patterns in the data. Although questionnaires “are not particularly suited for truly qualitative, exploratory research,” the inclusion of open-ended items is typical as follow-up questions to closed-ended prompts (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 107). These items provide richness to the quantitative data, thereby offering graphic examples and illustrative quotes. As such, responses from these open-ended items were used to support the descriptive statistics and illustrate the respondents’ views.

RESULTS

The first research question examined the content and formats of the TP of these in-service ESL teachers. This was accomplished via two closed-ended questions (Q9, Q10). For the 130 respondents who had a written TP, the average reported length of their TP was one page single-spaced (49%), two pages single-spaced (15%), half a page single-spaced (14%), and one and a half pages single spaced (12%). The remaining 10% reported other lengths, ranging from a single paragraph to a five-page essay. The respondents also answered that their TP had a standard, essay-like format. Specifically, 73% of the participants indicated that their TP had an introduction with a general thesis statement as well as a brief concluding statement (69%) restating their position. Respondents also tended to include a title (69%) but did not include a signature (24%).

The second research question focused on the topics in-service teachers reported addressing in their TPs. The four dominant topics this group of teachers reported including in their TP were (1) discussion of personal beliefs about language learning ($n = 117$ or 90%), (2) description of teaching approaches ($n = 114$ or 88%), (3) explanation of their roles ($n = 112$ or 86%), and (4) description of beliefs about language teaching ($n = 111$ or 85%). Also, 70 respondents (54%) included specific reference to language learning theories. In this data set, 73 teachers (56%) provided specific examples of teaching activities and assessment. Excerpts from different respondents who shared their TP are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Dominant Topics Included in a TP

Key categories	Excerpts from TPs
Personal beliefs about language learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My TP is developed from my personal philosophy of learning As a student, I expect my classes to be interesting and rewarding These expectations guide my teaching. 2. I create a supportive class environment and refer students to support services and services available in the community whenever necessary.
Description of teaching approaches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I favor a constructivist approach that incorporates collaborative activities and learner focused projects . . . to meet course objectives. 2. I strive for authenticity not just in language but also in content, materials, methods, and assessment. For example, I use . . .
Explanation of teacher roles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My role as a teacher is of a facilitator and motivator, who is sensitive to students' needs, helps them . . . 2. My international experiences have changed how I see the world and therefore how I perceive the role of education in our society. I believe strongly in . . .
Beliefs about language teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is imperative that we promote situational and task-based activities such as information-gap pair and group works grounded on . . . 2. Knowledge of current pedagogical practices and field-specific research underpins the methods I use. While methodology helps me teach, theory helps me understand For example . . .

Question 12 asked whether respondents included information about their education or program. Few referenced personal educational experiences; namely, 25% included academic references, 24% referenced academic texts, and 24% provided their graduate school's name (24%). Even fewer included the graduate program's name (17%), courses taken (21%), or professors' names (9%).

The questionnaire also asked the context in which the participants wrote their TPs. Of the 82 respondents who produced one during their academic training, 37 reported having written one

for a single course and 27 for two or more courses. Of those who wrote a TP for a particular course, 31 reported writing one for a teaching methodology course, 26 for a teaching practicum course, and 30 for inclusion in their teaching portfolio. When asked whether they had received guidance through a rubric or a model (Q5, Q6), only about 55% recalled having received a rubric (14%), a model (12%), or both (30%). The open-ended responses revealed more about the participants' experiences with and feelings about this guidance. Three respondents commented on the desire for more explicit guidance. Participant 30, a recent MA graduate, explained:

I've spent time looking for examples of ESL TPs and found very little consistency. I like mine, but I think it's possible others might think it's not good. I wish there were more consistent information available and that there were more workshop type PD opportunities available for writing a good TP.

There was evidence that some believed that the limited guidance in the form of rubrics and/or models may have been intentional on the part of their faculty. As respondent 12 noted:

They probably did not want us to be too influenced by others' ideas, so we were usually given the freedom to state it briefly or to expand and give examples from our own experience as teachers and/or students of language.

In reviewing the open-ended items, I also noticed the wish for consistent formats and clearly stated expectations. Participant 20, for example, wrote about how such transparency could encourage the professionalization of the field:

A TP is, in some ways, a means for the profession to define itself. Having a common understanding of what should and should not be included in a TP implies a potential convergence towards a common understanding of the expectations of a professional teacher.

In contrast, five participants maintained that too much explicit guidance might not be beneficial. They alluded to the dangers of standardization, in that it may stifle individual teachers' creativity. For instance, participant 27 argued:

I think the more we try to standardize teaching and ways of presenting teaching philosophies and practice, the more we hurt our profession. We are trying to make teachers and students cookie-cutter products when a wonderful earmark of our profession in the past has been diversity of experiences and approaches In specifying most acceptable formats, etc. we take the emphasis away from the actual process of feeling out, researching, and implementing good philosophy.

The third research question examined ESL teachers' beliefs compared with their practices. To explore this topic, respondents were asked when and how often they should and actually do update their TP (Q16 and Q7, respectively). The most common frequency was annually (45%; see Table 3). Most agreed it was important to update their TPs for job searches (71%). This coincided with their reported practice; a high percentage of participants reported revising and updating their TPs when searching for a new position (68%; Q8). Participant 110, for example, described how the "job market and [her] teaching experience and knowledge are constantly changing, and a TP should reflect those changes."

Although the majority believed in the importance of updating their TPs for job-related purposes, 32% reported that they did not need to update their TPs. The three most common explanations provided in Question 16 were (1) it was not a required document for their prospective place of employment, (2) it had not (yet) changed, or (3) it should not change solely to align with an employer's gleaned philosophy from the job ad. Participant 73

TABLE 3. Frequency of Updates

	Every semester Total	Yearly Total	Every 2 years Total	Job search Total	Never Total
Strongly agree	2 (1.5)	11 (8.5)	6 (4.6)	49 (37.7)	0 (0.8)
Agree	8 (6.2)	47 (36.2)	34 (26.2)	43 (33.1)	1 (0.8)
Neutral	53 (40.8)	45 (34.6)	65 (50.0)	31 (23.8)	24 (18.5)
Disagree	46 (35.4)	21 (16.2)	19 (14.6)	3 (2.3)	21 (16.2)
Strongly disagree	21 (16.2)	6 (4.6)	6 (4.6)	4 (3.1)	84 (64.6)

Note. Percentages are in parentheses.

showed such a position by asserting, “I am not going to change myself for a job. I hope that my prospective employers see that I have a solid philosophy.”

Question 19 examined whether a TP should be required for ESL job application portfolios. Two thirds of the participants (67%) appeared to be in favor of this, emphasizing that a TP (along with a CV and teaching materials) can provide potential employers with a better appreciation of the candidates, helping them determine if the candidate is a good fit for the prospective teaching environment. Participant 17 explained:

In many ways I feel that a teacher’s TP is more important than job duties—a good teacher can learn and improve on the job, but if their TP is in opposition to the program’s underlying mission, no amount of experience can fix that.

Another finding was that some participants saw the TP as a way to show their individuality. This was often described in claims that a program would benefit from diversity in its faculty. For that purpose, these participants recognized that a TP should include truthful statements that reflect their individual beliefs and not focus on what employers may want them to believe.

Only 11% of the respondents felt that TPs should not be included in job searches. Participant 79 expressed some practical considerations: “Give me a break—each job differs—you would require this for a part-time 6 hours per week adjunct ESOL teaching position in adult education paying \$25/hour for a new teacher?” Others believed it may be more useful to discuss their TP during interviews, as Participant 16 noted: “I think candidates who are being brought in for interviews (face to face or Skype) should be asked to submit their TP, but I don’t think that all ads should require them.” One respondent commented that there should be more transparency in the role that TPs play in job searches (Q21). Participant 84 explained: “I think writing a TP is a valuable exercise. I just wish that employers would be reasonable in requiring them. How much weight does it carry in an application? Do prospective employers actually read them?”

Finally, Question 18 asked participants to rate six descriptors of writing a TP: *rewarding, reflective, fun, challenging, overwhelming,*

and *tedious*. In total, 81% strongly agreed or agreed that it was a rewarding process and 92% maintained that it is a useful reflective task (see Table 4). Many believed that, although TPs are used for hiring practices, they should have a stronger reflective undertone. Respondent 36 wrote: “I think a personal statement completed for reflective purposes is more useful than a standard statement used to signal competence in a job search.” Participant 12 further expressed a desire for continuing this practice for reflective and professional reasons:

I would encourage all of us to write and share our philosophies and keep drafts in a journal over time. In this way, we can see how we evolve as teachers and learners. I also encourage teachers to publish about their ways of knowing and journeys to becoming teachers. We need these collective narratives in our profession. They help us bond as teachers and grow as professionals.

Writing a TP was also considered by 45% of the participants to be a fun task, although the task itself was believed to be challenging (72% strongly agreed or agreed); it was considered overwhelming by only 19% and tedious by only 8%.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although TPs are used in many higher education contexts, I have not located empirical studies that have examined this practice in the ESL teacher discourse community. This discussion reviews the

TABLE 4. Sentiment Toward Written TPs (Question 18 From Questionnaire)

	Strongly disagree Total	Disagree Total	Neutral Total	Agree Total	Strongly agree Total
Rewarding	0 (0.0)	5 (3.8)	2 (15.4)	62 (47.7)	43 (33.1)
Reflective	1 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	9 (6.9)	53 (40.8)	67 (51.5)
Fun	1 (0.8)	20 (15.4)	51 (39.2)	44 (33.8)	14 (10.8)
Challenging	3 (2.3)	11 (8.5)	22 (16.9)	57 (43.8)	37 (28.5)
Overwhelming	12 (9.2)	60 (46.2)	33 (25.4)	21 (16.2)	4 (3.1)
Tedious	19 (14.6)	48 (36.9)	40 (30.8)	23 (17.7)	0 (0.0)

Note. Percentages are in parentheses.

findings from the present study and contextualizes these within what we know from other fields of study. Recommendations for writing a TP are also provided.

The results show that in-service ESL teachers continue to engage in the practice of writing a TP. Teacher educators and teachers who are oriented toward working in North America-based language programs may benefit from learning more about this occluded genre. The practice of writing a TP also appears to serve important reflective functions. Thus, this practice should not be seen as serving uniquely bureaucratic functions. Importantly, teacher educators, preservice teachers, and in-service teachers from the field of ELT wishing to adopt a reflective teaching approach may benefit from the present discussion.

The first research question sought to uncover the features and topics that make up in-service ESL teachers' TPs. Nearly half of the participants reported having a one-page single-spaced statement, a finding that is in line with previous recommendations (Chism, 1997–1998). This group of writers also tended to adopt a formal organization. We could infer that TPs are thus expected to be of that length and follow the conventions of academic papers, especially when intended to be shared with potential employers. To guide novice writers with the formatting and organization of their TPs, I created a summary of the general description of the format of this occluded genre (see Table 5). It should be noted, however, that when written for more reflective reasons, mentors may encourage writers to use more personal forms of expressions (Goodyear & Allchin, 1998; Kearns & Subiño Sullivan, 2011).

To the best of my knowledge, ELT does not have field-specific specifications for TPs. Drawing on the present findings, TPs should discuss several dimensions of L2 pedagogy: (1) language

TABLE 5. Format Guidelines

Format	Description
Length	One to two pages, single-spaced
Organization	Formative—flexible and more creative Summative—academic genre of paper
Layout	Title
Voice	First person narrative

learning and teaching, (2) teaching approaches, and (3) roles of teachers (see Table 2). In ESL settings, where various cultures and values interact, teachers tend to rely on different teaching approaches and adopt multiple roles to meet the needs and context-specific demands of their heterogeneous learners. Moreover, a consideration of roles in both the classroom and institution at large may be of equal importance given that teaching is “an activity which is embedded within a set of culturally bound assumption” (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 107). I would therefore argue that examining learning and teaching approaches as well as roles is important for TPs written for both formative and summative purposes.

The literature reporting on successful TPs for hiring purposes suggests that one of the key features of a successful TP is evidence of practice. By not providing concrete evidence of practice, TPs may be interpreted as superficial and lacking sincerity, a serious threat to the credibility of the applicant. Although such concrete examples have been described as important (see, e.g., Kearns & Subiño Sullivan, 2011), only 56% of the participants in the current study included examples of teaching activities or assessment in their TP. This may be due to the brevity of the statement when written for potential employers, but perhaps including such examples would increase the applicant’s chances of standing out from the other applicants and also encourage more critical reflection of one’s practices. Explicit training may be warranted so that final drafts include sample tasks and/or assessment practices. In sum, based on the information that this group of teachers identified as constituting their TPs, I listed the four core components that a TP should include. These are accompanied by sample reflective questions to guide writers (see Table 6). After providing genuine answers to these questions, the task of writing the TP may become more straightforward.

CONCLUSION

Currently, in the field of ELT, few discussions pertaining to TPs are available. From personal experiences and from current available discussions, TPs appear to serve more than one goal. Specifically, the act of writing a TP was, for many participants in

this study, a reflective experience but also served bureaucratic functions. By asking preservice teachers to write a TP during their coursework, despite having limited teaching experience, instructors may encourage a critical exploration of deep-rooted belief systems (Crookes, 2003). Also, with limited teaching experience or opportunities to teach during graduate school, reflection-*for*-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991) may be more realistic than expecting reflection-*in*-action and reflection-*on*-action (Schön, 1987). According to Killion and Todnem (1991), reflection-*for*-action orients reflection toward the future using past experiences (e.g., language learning and teaching experiences, coursework) to inform future practices. By reflecting on the past and on the future and writing about current and emerging ideas, less experienced teachers can communicate the vision of who they are and who they aspire to be. I argue that preservice teachers need to tackle this complex cognitive task directly while learning about pedagogy because the processes of learning about pedagogy and reflecting on personal beliefs are complementary (Crookes, 2003).

TABLE 6. Core Components and Sample Reflective Questions

Components	Questions/prompts to facilitate reflection
Beliefs about language learning	What did you enjoy as a learner? What helped you stay engaged in the learning? What mediated your levels of motivation/ anxiety?
Beliefs about language teaching	What methods and theories guide your teaching practices? What type of materials/ideas do you bring to the class? What individual learner differences mediate learning?
Teacher roles	What teacher roles do you play in the ESL/EFL classroom? What roles do you play in the larger social context? What roles do learners play?
Enactment of teaching philosophy	What language learning tasks do you implement? How is assessment carried out?

The reflective turn in ELT is benefiting teachers, and therefore teacher educators worldwide may want to consider the inclusion of writing a TP to enable their future teachers to *become* teachers early on in their teacher education program. Each individual and context has unique histories and it is therefore necessary that we as teachers engage in the process of externalizing beliefs for the purpose of understanding who we are. Finally, the finding that these ESL teachers benefit from engaging in this practice strongly suggests that we should encourage an open discussion of what teachers (think they) do and why and how teachers (think they) do it on an international level. The process of reflecting on what we do is central to growth and long-term satisfaction, and I believe that the present study will benefit preservice ESL teachers and their mentors in thinking more actively about how to write a TP for reflective purposes and professional growth.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1

1. I have a written ESL/EFL TP [teaching philosophy] statement.

Section 2

2. I wrote an ESL/EFL TP during: Undergraduate program; MA program; PhD program; After graduation; Other

3. I was required to write my TP in this course: Teaching methodologies; Teaching practicum; Applied linguistics; Capstone; Portfolio; Qualifying paper; I was not required to write a TP for a course; Other
4. My professor provided a model of TPs. True; False
5. My professor provided guidelines and/or a rubric. True; False
6. Describe what information was provided in the guidelines and/or rubric. [Open-ended box]
7. I update my ESL/EFL TP: Once per semester; Once per year; Every other year; Never; Other
8. When I go on the job market, I update my ESL/EFL TP. True; False
9. My TP statement, single-spaced, is: ½ page; 1 page; 1½ pages; 2 pages; Other
10. My ESL/EFL TP includes: Title; Introductory paragraph; Concluding paragraph; Signature
11. I include the following in my ESL/EFL TP: Description of teaching approaches; Examples of teaching activities/assessment; Language learning theories; Beliefs about language learning; Beliefs about language teaching; Roles of the teacher; Academic references; Other
12. I include the following in my ESL/EFL TP (mark all that apply): Name of graduate school; Name of graduate program; Courses taken; Books read; Professors I have had; Other
13. I also include the following in my ESL/EFL TP: [Open-ended box]
14. I feel confident about what to include in my ESL/EFL TP. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Section 3

15. I believe that all in-service ESL/EFL teachers should have a TP. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
16. I believe that ESL/EFL teachers should update their TP: Once per semester; Once per year; Every other year; When they go on the job market; Never; Other
17. I believe that an ESL/EFL TP should specify: Name of graduate program; Name of graduate school; Beliefs about language teaching; Descriptions of teaching approaches; Examples of teaching activities/assessment; Courses I have taken; Books read; Language learning theories; Beliefs about language learning; Roles of teachers; Academic references; Number of years as ESL/EFL teacher; Information about current employment; Professors I have had; Title; Signature; Thesis statement; Other
18. I believe that writing an ESL/EFL TP is a: Challenging task; Fun task; Rewarding task; Useful reflective task; Overwhelming task; Tedious task; Other
Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree

19. I believe that ESL/EFL job application ads/portfolios should require a teachers' TP. Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree
20. List five adjectives that best represent the process of writing an ESL/EFL TP. [Open-ended box]
21. Comments:

Section 4

22. Gender
23. Current country of residence
24. Age
25. Type of program(s) of current work: Intensive English program; College ESL classes; University ESL classes; K-12; Other
26. Years working as an ESL/EFL teacher
27. Highest degree
28. Country in which MA degree was obtained
29. Name of degree
30. Country in which PhD degree was obtained (if applicable)
31. Name of degree
32. Year of graduation (highest degree)
33. Language in which TP was written
34. First language
35. Second language
36. Knowledge of other languages
37. Willingness to participate in an interview: Yes; No
38. Email:
39. Willingness to share written TP: Yes; No
40. Email:
41. Willingness to enter raffle: Yes; No
42. Email: