

An Analysis of TESOL Faculty Positions

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Abstract

The Chronicle of Higher Education (TCHE) is a common source for new faculty positions in higher education. Job announcements for TESOL and related topics (e.g., English as a second language) posted in the *TCHE* were read weekly for one academic year. Specific attributes of the announcement were noted for analysis using a coding sheet compatible with the TESOL discipline. The Carnegie Foundation designations for higher education institutions resulted in eight categories (two each for research, doctoral, Masters, and baccalaureate-granting institutions (Evangelauf, 1994). During the 2006 -2007 academic year, a total of 63 TESOL position announcements appeared with 53.8% offering tenure track positions. Almost 40% of the positions were at Masters comprehensive institutions, according to the Carnegie ranking. More than 35% of these positions, regardless of the type of institution, were entry-level positions (assistant professor). Regarding teaching responsibilities, more than 46% of the advertised positions requested the candidate to teach graduate courses and 33% requested undergraduate courses. For non-teaching responsibilities, more than 52% of the positions expected scholarly activities, while 30% expected the candidate to supervise student teachers.

Keywords: TESOL, Jobs, Positions, Demand, Education

Introduction

The Chronicle of Higher Education (TCHE) is a common source for new faculty members to identify potential positions for which to apply. This national listing includes faculty and administrative positions which are available in electronic and hard copy. The listings are organized alphabetically, as well as by the discipline and state where the institution exists (until August, 2009). The field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) is sometimes referred to as “English Language Learners” (ELLs) or “Limited English Proficiency” (LEP). Searching for a faculty position at an institution of higher education is one of the most stressful activities for men and women embarking on their careers... The “job search” is both time-consuming and expensive (Adams, 2002). The purpose of this study was to describe and document all TESOL faculty positions that were advertised in *TCHE* during the 2006-2007 academic years.

Theoretical Framework

TESOL

For several years, the U.S. has experienced increasing demands in TESOL, from K-12 to post-secondary education (Crawford, 1997). The enrollment of ELLs has increased faster than schools and teacher education programs have been able to prepare teachers to serve them. According to Crawford, K-12 schools are experiencing a severe shortage of certified TESOL teachers, thereby contributing to the greatest single barrier of effective instructional programs for ELL students. These changing demographics, including immigration, were noted by Bulter-Pascoe in 1997, and this same pattern continues today. According to Batalova, Fix, and Murray (2006), from 1996 to 2006, the K-12 ELL population “rose by over 60%.” They reported that this growth is occurring in regions with little or no experience with ELL students. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education expanded its funding programs for TESOL. Some programs include a TESOL endorsement to a teacher’s existing certificate, a national certification, or an online master’s degree program. According to the “Working Group on ELL Policy” (August & Kenji, 2009), America’s ELL students’ needs are not being addressed effectively:

The challenges ELL students face are many. They are most likely to attend schools with the sparsest of resources, staffed by ill-prepared teachers who are overwhelmed by high concentrations of low-achieving students. Even in schools with access to Title I resources, the attention paid to ELL students may not be appropriately tailored to their unique needs in learning the English language and in gaining academic skills and subject matter knowledge.

A number of states with high ELL student populations, such as California, face severe budget deficits (Reed, 2008). August and Kenji (2009) summarize several studies that bode ill for states similar to California—those with high ELL populations:

Several recent studies have predicted a steep decline in per capita income as a direct result of failing to educate the state’s youth to levels that will sustain economic growth (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005a; 2005b; National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2005). The least educated portion of the school-age population is English language learners.

If state governments sometimes engage in public language that is marked by “the fear of others” (Fox, 2007-2008), then educators can continue to expect a difficult road ahead, regardless of rational arguments that well-educated ELL students will help our economy, not to mention enrich our other cultures. Florez (1997) noted that conditions such as these are very challenging for TESOL teachers, which results in high turnover and burnout rates.

According to Janzen (2007), the complexities and importance of reading present special problems for TESOL teachers. Her study, based upon classroom observations, identified six issues in teaching ELL students: 1) addressing the wide range of ELLs proficiencies; 2) finding a variety of ways to use different reading materials (e.g. textbooks, newspapers, etc.); 3) teaching decoding skills, writing, and vocabulary; 4) encouraging the “love of reading”; 5) addressing school demands on mainstreaming classes; and 6) helping

students who have limitations in their native language regarding reading. Blumenthal and Machado (2006) reported similar problems that exist for community college students whose instructors have limited experiences with ELL teaching approaches. The influx of immigrants has put additional stress on instructors, administrators, and the public who are forced to re-define the roles of community colleges. Earlier, the TESOL professional organization (2003) expressed concern that the demand for TESOL trained faculty had been fulfilled with part-time and/or adjunct faculty, who had little or no preparation in TESOL. This situation exacerbates the larger issue of the two-tiered faculty structure, where non-full-time faculty receive lower salaries, greater teaching loads, and less job security.

Castle and Arends (2003) surveyed the American Association of College of Teacher Education institutions about faculty positions from 1997 -1999. They questioned 752 members and found no significant differences for institution size, type, or sponsor. They concluded that demand exceeded supply of new faculty, with shortages critical in early childhood, elementary, library, mathematics, reading, and special education. For this two-year period, there were a total of 54 TESOL/bilingual positions that averaged 20.5 applications each, while 35.8% of these positions ended as failed searches. Cunningham and Bradley (2007) analyzed a 2004 survey by the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) regarding the preparation of K-12 teachers nationally. These researchers reported that the TESOL programs had increased since 2001; however, there are only a limited number of preparation programs. Currently, AAEE (2009) noted that TESOL positions are classified as having critical shortages in the number of applicants.

TCHE Research

Several other discipline areas have tracked faculty positions and availability for the last decade. For example, Reys (2008) reported that there were more mathematics education positions available at higher education institutions than doctoral graduates. He also noted that most mathematics education doctoral programs are producing a small number of graduates yearly. The current “graying of faculty” has resulted in more positions in mathematics education being available than their current new doctoral graduates. Barrow and Bennett (2007a) used the *THCE* listing to survey the field of social studies education. The majority of these positions for social studies educators focused upon teaching undergraduate classes, supervision of student teachers, writing grants, and submitting publications. Barrow (2007b) reported 153 science education positions listed in the *TCHE* for the 2006-2007 academic year. The positions with the highest need for future science education faculty were undergraduate elementary science methods and graduate courses. Regardless of level of Carnegie rank, there was expectation that faculty would be submitting scholarly work. Barrow and Sims (2009) found that music education positions have a broad range of responsibilities. Generally, these positions had a K-12 school preparation in their orientation. However, some had an instrumental focus, vocal focus, band director focus, or combinations of these. The typical announcement requested an assistant professor at a public institution who is expected to supervise student teachers

and exhibit scholarly activity in either research or performance. A review of the literature found no previously reported analysis of TESOL faculty positions.

Methodology

Job announcements for TESOL and related topics (i.e. English as a second language) that were posted in the *TCHE* were read weekly for one academic year. *TCHE* was selected for study due to its national distribution and tradition as a source of vacant positions at all types of institutions of higher education. A typical academic calendar year, August through July, supplied listings for positions starting in fall, 2006. These announcements contained the following specific attributes: Displayed or non-displayed (alphabetical listing) posting, state, tenure-track or not, teaching responsibilities, home department (education, arts and humanities, other), non-teaching responsibilities, whether doctoral completion is required, applicant's prior teaching experience, rank of the position, and whether an Internet address was included.

The Carnegie Foundation (Evangelauf, 1994) classifies all higher education institutions into eight categories which results in two each for research, doctoral, Master's comprehensive, and baccalaureate categories. These categories are based upon the number of doctoral degrees awarded, external grant funds, etc. This system was used rather than the current ranking to compare TESOL with other *TCHE* faculty research. An existing coding sheet (Barrow and Fox, 2007) was modified to match the TESOL discipline. The coding was checked by a second researcher and all disagreements were resolved.

Results

Of the 63 TESOL positions listed during this period, 53.8% were tenure-track lines and 52.3% required the doctorate to be completed. Regarding teaching responsibilities, 46.2% included graduate course instruction responsibilities, while 33.8% included undergraduate teaching. Many of the job listings did not identify what student level the faculty member would be teaching. For non-teaching responsibilities, 30.8% included supervising student teachers, 18.5% interacting with K-12 schools, 13.8% grant proposal writing, 52.3% engaging in scholarly activities, and 20% using technology. Regarding prior teaching experience, 32.3% expected some prior college teaching, 35.4% expected secondary experience, 33.8% expected elementary level experience, and 30.8% expected teaching experience at the middle school level. The placement of the ads within *TCHE* was diverse, with 55.4% using a display ad, and 65.9% including Internet addresses (sometimes used for application) (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Position Listing and Responsibilities (N=65)

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Tenure	35	53.8
Teaching		
Undergraduate	22	33.8
Elementary	3	4.6
Middle	1	1.5
Secondary	5	7.7
Graduate	30	46.2
Focus		
Reading	5	7.7
Writing	5	7.7
Grammar	4	6.2
Non- teaching Responsibilities		
Supervise student teaching	20	30.8
K- 12 schools	12	18.5
Grant writing	9	13.8
Scholarly activities	34	52.3
Technology use	13	20.0
Prior teaching experience		
Elementary	22	33.8
Middle	20	30.8
Secondary	23	35.4
College	21	32.3
Doctorate required	34	52.3
Display ad	36	55.4
World Wide Web included	37	56.9

Almost 40% of the positions advertised were at Masters comprehensive institutions. The second most frequent type of institution was classified as research institutions. These two types combined accounted for more than 60% of all of the positions listed. More than 35% of these positions, regardless of the type of institution, were entry-level (assistant professor). It should be noted that more than 30% of the positions did not indicate rank (Table 2).

Table 2
Rank of Positions at Carnegie Institutions (N=63)

	Full Professor		Assoc Prof		Asst Prof		Full/Assoc		Assoc/Asst		Less than Asst		Not specified		TOTAL	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Research 1	-	-	1	50	4	17.4	-	-	2	40.0	4	50.0	3	13.6	14	
Research 2	-	-	-	-	2	8.7	1	33.3	-	-	-	-	3	13.6	6	
Doctoral 1	-	-	-	-	4	17.9	1	33.3	-	-	1	12.5	-	-	6	
Doctoral 2	-	-	1	50	1	4.3	-	-	2	40.0	-	-	1	4.5	5	
Master 1	-	-	-	-	11	47.3	1	33.3	1	20.0	2	25.0	10	45.5	25	
Master 2	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.5	2	
Baccalaureate 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	1	4.5	2	
Baccalaureate 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	13.6	3	
TOTAL	5	8			22				2		23		3			
										63						

Scholarly activities (publications, presentations, etc.) were expected at 54% of the institutions. This expectation is not just at research and doctoral level institutions. All of the positions being searched expected all new faculty members to be active scholars (Table 3).

Table 3
Non-Teaching Responsibilities for Carnegie Institution (n=63)

	Research I		Research II		Doctoral I		Doctoral II		Master I		Master II		Baccalaureate I		Baccalaureate II	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Supervise student teachers	3	4.8	4	6.3	-	-	2	3.2	9	14.3	-	-	1	1.6	1	1.6
K-12 Schools	1	1.6	2	3.2	2	3.2	2	3.2	2	3.2	-	-	1	1.6	2	3.2
Grant writing	3	4.8	-	-	1	1.6	-	-	4	6.3	-	-	1	1.6	-	-
Scholarly activities	7	11.1	6	9.5	5	7.9	1	1.6	13	20.6	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.6
Using technology	3	4.8	-	-	1	1.6	-	-	7	11.1	-	-	1	1.6	1	1.6

The home department/college identified in the ads was also analyzed. None of the positions were joint appointments, such as education and English. Forty percent of TESOL positions were based in Arts and Science, while 33% were based in education. However, 26.2% failed to identify a home department or college.

Discussion

The typical TESOL position in 2007-2008 requested an assistant professor at a masters comprehensive (I and II) institution, teaching a variety of undergraduate and graduate TESOL offerings, and maintaining an active scholarly record. Compared to other *TCHÉ* studies (Barrow, et al., 2007a; 2007b; 2009), TESOL faculty positions included fewer tenure track positions. As well, fewer of these TESOL positions required candidates to have completed a doctoral degree. Overall, the TESOL job announcements contained less specific information (e.g. level of instruction) than in social studies education, science education, and music education.

Regarding the non-teaching responsibilities identified in the position announcements, scholarly activities were the most common. Regardless of rank of Carnegie institution, future TESOL faculty members are expected to participate in scholarly activities (e. g. presentations, publications). That is, faculty members can assist their graduate students in obtaining experiences in submitting a conference paper, preparing the presentation, and submitting it for publication, thereby promoting a valuable experience in this aspect of a higher education faculty member's role in the profession. If potential faculty members do not have experience with a student teacher, either as a cooperating teacher or university supervisor, it is deemed beneficial to have related experience. This could involve participating in a student teaching seminar and/or supervising of a limited number of TESOL placements in K-12 settings.

This study about the supply and demand of TESOL positions will help future TESOL faculty to better understand the job market, to set realistic expectations, and to consider their options for making themselves more marketable. Graduate faculty members can use this information of prospective employer's expectations as they mentor their graduate students. Administrators can consider their institutional needs in relation to other similar Carnegie institutions as they develop vacancy announcement about what useful components to include in their description. TESOL teacher preparation programs should prepare teachers (either preservice or graduate) for appropriate instructional approaches that focus upon the needs of the ELL students. Future TESOL studies could analyze various programs for how they prepare future ELL teachers in interacting with students and their special needs. Barrow and Germann (2006) reported on the structure and operation of search committees for science education positions. A similar study could be conducted for TESOL positions, which could investigate whether explicit job responsibilities and expectations influence applications and successful searches.

The number of positions available during this academic year illustrates the increased demand for the TESOL faculty at various levels of higher education. During the 2006-2007 academic year, there were 63 different positions. Earlier, Castle and Arends (2003) reported that there were 54 positions for a two-year period in the late 1990s, or an average of 27 positions per year. The 63 found in this study is nearly 2 ½ times the annual number reported by Castle and Arends. Castle and Arends did not ascertain the number of positions that were tenure track. This study found only 53.8% of the positions were tenure track, which underscores concerns about the employment of a large numbers of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty hired to address the growing numbers of TESOL

students. Earlier, Egbert (2003) stressed the use of computer assisted language learning (CALL) to facilitate TESOL instruction. However, this study found only 20% specified technology in the position announcements.

Reys (2008) has indicated there is a shortage of qualified new mathematics education faculty. In addition, many of the doctoral granting institutions graduate only a few Ph.D.'s yearly. A future study could be conducted to determine the major institutions which produce new TESOL faculty and their current capacity. However, the recent economic downturn and its impact could reduce the number of TESOL applicants, which could make the employment situation even more critical. TESOL positions have a lower percentage that are tenure track; consequently, non-tenure positions, including adjunct and part-time, are more vulnerable during these limited economic times. Institutions have had to terminate non-tenured faculty to "balance their budgets."

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