Hong Kong on-line mentoring network for English teachers (*TeleNex,* http://www.telenex.hku.hk/). In the longer term, we are planning to establish an integrated 4-year BATESL programme, with a much greater emphasis on practice teaching in the extra fourth year. What our experience has taught us, however, is the need for support for teachers after the teaching practice, during the early years of their careers, if we want to be sure that the lessons learned in our programme are carried over into the teaching careers of our graduates.

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The TESOL Practicum: An Integrated Model in the U.S.

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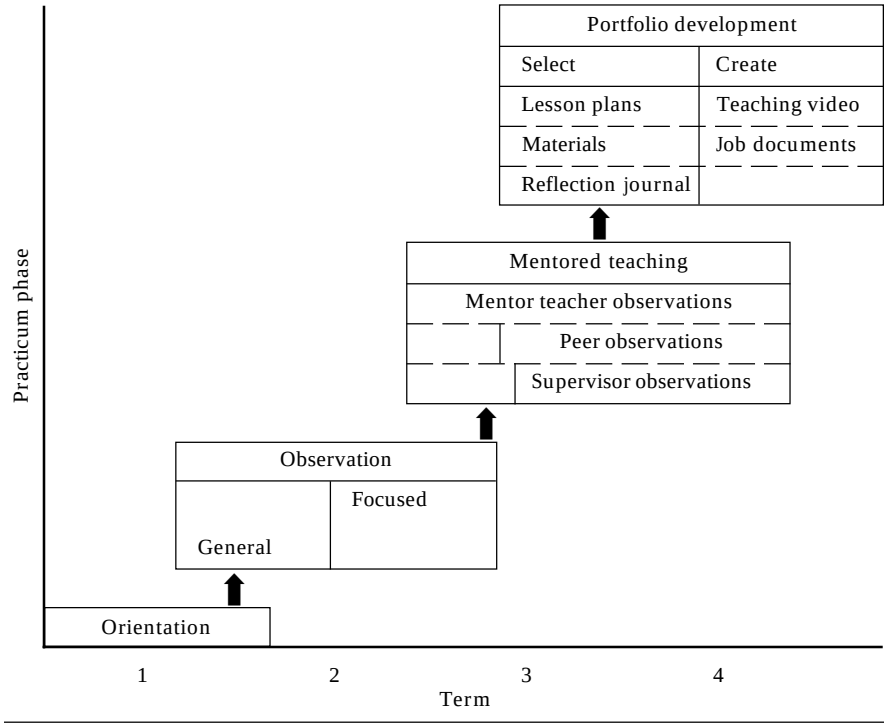
■ In recent years, the practicum has emerged as an increasingly common feature of teacher preparation programs. A survey conducted by

Palmer (1995) of graduate programs listed in the *Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States, 1992–1994* (Kornblum, 1992) revealed that two thirds of the programs that responded required students to complete a practicum or internship course. In an earlier study, Richards and Crookes (1988) reported that 75% of the programs they reviewed included a practicum experience, although the authors noted that a wide range of activities occurred under the rubric of practicum, including observing experienced teachers, observing peers live or on videotape, being observed by supervising or mentor teachers, conferencing with supervising or mentor teachers, attending practicum seminars, participating in peer teaching sessions, and delivering classroom instruction. The evidence suggests the TESOL practicum constitutes an important element in most ESOL teacher preparation programs and that it often combines teaching and nonteaching experiences. What is less clear, however, is how best to organize the experience so that it effectively integrates knowledge about teaching and the act of teaching.

Despite its recognized importance and prevalence in MATESOL programs, few published descriptions of practicum models exist (Johnson, 1996b). What follows is one model for delivering a campus-based practicum in ESOL teacher preparation that operated at Oregon State University from 1989 through 1994. It was supported by an external contract and funds from the Oregon State System of Higher Education. The model systematically sequences and integrates some of the most significant teaching and nonteaching activities included in the TESOL practicum, with the goal of developing teachers who have the self-knowledge and skills associated with effective classroom practice (see Figure 1). What distinguishes the model is the multiterm, developmental nature of the experience; the degree of integration it achieves; and the portfolio assessment used to evaluate students' growth. This practicum has five principal characteristics.

1. The practicum is integrated into the academic program. The students' academic program is 12 months in duration, and they begin preparing for and participating in the practicum experience from their first month in the TESOL program.
2. The delivery of the practicum emphasizes a team approach. The team includes mentor teachers (who serve as ESL teachers, models, and coaches); graduate program faculty (who serve as supervising teachers, academic advisors, and graduate course instructors); language institute administrators (who serve as language program managers); and the practicum students (who serve as classroom assistants, observers, and ESL teachers). Each team member is involved in every phase of the yearlong experience and participates in a collegial, consultative decision-making process.

FIGURE 1
Model of the Practicum Experience



3. The practicum provides intensive modeling and coaching. Mentor teachers spend an average of 5 hours per week working with the student (assisting with lesson planning, reacting to proposed lesson plans, and offering encouragement and practical tips).
4. The practicum incorporates extensive, systematic observation. Students engage in general observations (Fanselow, 1988) and focused or guided observations (Sayavedra, 1993) of mentor teachers during the orientation and observation phases. Students are observed regularly by their mentor teachers and by a supervising faculty member during the teaching phase and observe (and coach) each other during the teaching phase.
5. The practicum experience is assessed by means of a portfolio. Prepared by the students, the portfolio documents their cumulative development over the yearlong experience. The portfolio is shared with the student's graduate advisor and evaluated by the advisor before credit is conferred for the entire practicum experience.

STRENGTHS OF THE PRACTICUM MODEL

What are the major strengths of a practicum model that includes these characteristics? Most notably, such a model acknowledges the long-term, developmental nature of learning to teach. Students receive substantial support when it is needed most: when they begin each new experience. The amount of explicit modeling and coaching declines as students gain confidence and competence over the course of the year. Moreover, fewer demands are made on the students (cognitively and psychologically) in the first two terms than in the last two. During the orientation phase, practicum students attend weekly staff meetings; serve as program aides who assist with class field trips, community-based activities, and small-group work; and conduct general observations. In this way, practicum students are introduced to the culture of the practicum site and afforded opportunities to develop relationships with staff and ESL students before they are required to assume the role of classroom teacher. By the time practicum students begin the teaching phase in Term 3, they have been oriented to the practicum site, have formed working relationships with staff and students, and have completed 60–80 hours of classroom observation of a mentor teacher. This pattern of providing more support early in each new experience continues into the teaching phase, when mentor teachers meet more frequently and offer more explicit directions and suggestions to the students at the beginning of the term than at the end. As the practicum students gain greater self-knowledge and skill, mentor teachers and graduate faculty increasingly frame their comments as questions intended to stimulate reflection, exploration, and discovery (Gebhard, 1984). Having been challenged throughout the experience to reflect on and critique their (and others') teaching—using a variety of means, including journals, video recordings, observations of peers and mentors, and coaching sessions—students emerge from the yearlong experience better prepared to teach and to continue developing as professionals.

Another strength lies in the integration of learning activities and team members into every aspect of the experience. For instance, valuable nonteaching activities, such as observing mentor teachers and assisting ESL students, are combined with teaching activities and the graduate students' academic program in a meaningful integration of learning about teaching while watching and learning to teach. Whereas many programs treat the practicum as a capstone experience (or at least as an experience not to be undertaken before completing significant course work), this model considers the academic and field experiences as interrelated and complementary parts of a whole that students engage in simultaneously. The model works, in part, because it carefully integrates students into both the practicum site and the language teaching class-

room in a systematic, gradual way that increases the likelihood that the experience will be successful. Johnson (1996b) notes that tension can develop between the vision students have of the practicum and the reality they experience. This model narrows the gap between the two by better articulating the academic program to the practicum and using the knowledge gained in both contexts to promote students' development.

MATESOL programs rely extensively on essay exams and research papers to assess students' learning and development. And these assessment measures, though useful for evaluating some aspects of the students' experience in the program, are a myopic response to the practicum. Wiggins (1993) submits, "What we should be assessing is the student's ability to prepare for and master the various 'roles' and situations that competent professionals encounter in their work" (p. 202). Essay exams and research papers provide limited direct evidence that students are capable of fulfilling their professional roles and responsibilities. Portfolio assessment, on the other hand, is an appropriate alternative given the purpose of the practicum, which, in principle at least, forms the nexus between knowledge about teaching and the act of teaching. Portfolio development constitutes the culminating task in this yearlong practicum experience. The artifacts students place in their portfolios provide direct evidence of what they do as language teachers and offers a record of their development over the course of the experience. In addition, the portfolio is designed to help students make the transition from the graduate program to the world of work, a consideration Reid (1995/1996) states needs to be addressed by more MA in TESL/TEFL programs.

The portfolio contains five types of artifacts: (a) job search documents; (b) a teaching video; (c) lesson plans; (d) student-developed instructional materials, and (e) a reflection journal in which students record reactions to teaching—insights discovered, assumptions questioned, or alternatives considered. The portfolio development phase has students select and organize the artifacts from the mentored-teaching phase (items c through e above) as well as create job search documents and a teaching video. The job search documents consist of a cover letter, current résumé, and letters of recommendation from mentor teachers, language program administrators, and supervising faculty. Additionally, students can include teaching evaluations completed by supervising faculty and ESL students. (See Johnson, 1996a, for a description of other ways of using portfolio assessment in ESOL teacher preparation programs.)

Portfolio assessment offers faculty in ESOL teacher preparation programs a more complete and accurate picture of who their graduates are and what they are capable of doing in L2 classrooms—something a single paper or practicum log cannot. Moreover, students find that the

portfolio development process increases their self-confidence and directly assists them in finding employment.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRACTICUM MODEL

This particular approach to the practicum requires considerable coordination and cooperation. Students, mentor teachers, language program administrators, and graduate faculty must meet regularly to plan and confer on practicum-related matters. Sharing responsibility for the outcomes of the practicum requires a greater investment from each team member than is required in less fully articulated practicum experiences. The approach also assumes the willingness of team members to accept new ways of doing things, which in the case of mentor teachers, language program administrators, and graduate faculty may mean relinquishing some control and authority.

Certainly the most obvious limitation in the model is the cost. Mentor teachers meet with practicum students 5 hours a week, and coaching sessions can last longer than scheduled. Including observations and group meetings, the total commitment of a mentor teacher can easily exceed 6 hours a week. Therefore, it is important to compensate ESL teachers for the demands of intensive mentoring by offering reductions in their teaching loads and monetary stipends. The intensity of the mentoring relationship also makes it hard to serve as a mentor teacher year after year. Thus, a sufficient pool of master teachers must exist in a program so that mentors can be rotated every few cycles. Another consideration is that practicum students receive assistantships for four consecutive terms even though they assume full classroom teaching responsibilities only in the last two terms. This can strain the resources of some institutions. The cost of tuition remission and stipends limits the number of graduate students who can participate in the experience.

In summary, this practicum model offers students an integrated, developmental experience that acknowledges the long-term process of learning to teach and becoming members of a profession. It connects knowledge about teaching to the act of teaching and lays the foundation for continued personal growth and professional development. In short, it represents a commitment to developing teachers that contributes as much to the individual as it does to the profession as a whole.

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