



Title of Report: Online Seminar in Language Teacher Education at Monterey Institute of International Studies

Case Report Author: Kathleen M. Bailey

Organization: [Monterey Institute of International Studies¹](#) - Monterey, California, USA

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1. Identify and describe the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO).

The PDO described in this case report is an online seminar on language teacher education. It was designed to prepare MA candidates in TESOL and Teaching a Foreign Language (TFL) for their future roles as teacher trainers. The course is offered as an elective in the TESOL-TFL MA Programs at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS). However, it is a required course for the MIIS Certificate in Language Program Administration (LPA).

The Language Teacher Education seminar is offered intensively during the month of January (see “J-Term” courses below) each year. It was first offered online in January 2008. The Monterey Institute (in Monterey, California) is a graduate school of Middlebury College in Vermont. Another online course in the LPA curriculum is offered at the same time – the Introduction to Language Program Administration.

2. Describe the target audience for the PDO.

The seminar is open to MA candidates at MIIS and also to other qualified teachers or language program administrators (i.e., those who meet the MIIS admissions requirements). Many of the TESOL MA candidates who enroll are about to become Peace Corps volunteers and are likely to have teacher training responsibilities during their Peace Corps service. There are usually between eight and eighteen students in the class. The course participants come with a range of teaching experiences. Almost all have completed at least one semester of graduate work. They also range in age from 22 to nearing retirement.

Students may take the course from anywhere in the world, as long as they have a reliable internet connection. In the past, course participants have been located in Egypt, El Salvador, China, India, Japan, Russia, and various parts of the United States.

MIIS students take this course online in part because it is only being offered online at this time. It is offered intensively during the month of January, and completion of the course lightens

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the students' subsequent spring semester workloads.

3. Describe how you recruit students for your PDO.

Students are recruited via the MIIS website (see <http://www.miis.edu>). We also tell prospective TESOL and TFL students about this course (and the other LPA courses) at Visit Monterey Day (a campus-wide event which is held three times per year). Enrolled students receive additional information about the online seminar at new student orientation. Publicity about the course is sometimes provided at the MIIS booth at the annual TESOL Convention.

4. Describe the curriculum choices made.

The syllabus for the course was developed by Dr. Kathleen M. Bailey, the course instructor, an experienced language teacher and teacher educator. She taught the same course in face-to-face (ftf) mode for many years before converting it to the online format. The student-teacher ratio in the online course offering is the same as it was in the earlier ftf format (i.e., between eight and eighteen students to one professor).

Online delivery was chosen for this course for three reasons. First, our affiliation with Middlebury College in 2009 put us on the Middlebury academic calendar, which includes “J-Term” – courses taught intensively during the month of January. This seminar had previously worked well in an intensive three-week format in ftf mode, so it was a likely course to be offered intensively during J-Term.

Second, the MIIS administration wanted to move to “open architecture learning.” That is, the administration wanted to make more courses available to students in a range of circumstances (e.g., those who were travelling during the winter break, serving in the Peace Corps, and doing other off-campus internships).

Third, since more and more teacher education is being offered online, the faculty wanted our TESOL and TFL MA candidates to have some experience of the online delivery mode before they become teacher trainers themselves.

5. Explain the PDO's over-arching goals and specific objectives.

The over-arching goal of the Seminar on Language Teacher Education is to prepare the participants to be teacher trainers. The seminar also has nine specific purposes:

- (1) to help participants understand different philosophies and models of teacher education;
- (2) to help participants articulate their own personal philosophy of teacher education;
- (3) to help participants understand the role of prior learning in shaping attitudes about teaching and teacher education;
- (4) to provide participants with guided practice in designing pre-service and/or in-service language teacher education program;
- (5) to provide participants with resources and strategies to promote their own ongoing



- professional development;
- (6) to give participants first-hand experience with online teacher education; and
 - (7) to help participants develop their own time management skills as language teaching professionals.

6. Describe the teaching and learning activities used in the PDO and what online applications are used to support these activities.

The course participants accomplish these goals by doing the reading assignments, reading and contributing to the discussion fora, listening to recorded voices of language teacher educators and doing tasks related to their comments, interacting via Adobe Connect (a virtual classroom web-conferencing tool), listening to and making online presentations with Adobe Connect, doing independent reading and internet-searching, submitting written work, commenting on other participants' written work, and receiving feedback from the professor.

The primary technological tool that supports these activities is the course Moodle (a learning management system – LMS). It is opened to the students before the beginning of the course, so students can work at their own pace and can get a head start if they wish to do so. Students complete numerous tasks based on the assigned readings and the teacher educators' voices in the asynchronous discussion forums. (The recordings were made, edited, and exported using Audacity.) The course Moodle also provided links to related websites and reference lists, PDFs of key articles on the topic of the day, and access to e-reserve readings.

As noted above, Adobe Connect, a virtual synchronous classroom, is used for a few lectures and also for students' presentations. The Adobe Connect system provides a whiteboard for posting PowerPoint slideshows, documents, and photographs. It also gives live voice access and camera access to images of the participants.

7. Describe how the PDO helps students understand the local context in which they are studying so that they can work together with other students in the global context of your online PDO. "Local context" refers to the social, material, and cultural dimensions of students' daily lives.

Participants may be located in (or aspire to work in) very diverse geographic locations. Some know one another before the online course begins, and some do not. To help build a sense of community, online ice-breakers are used in the first few days of the course. Community building activities are incorporated throughout the course.

In addition, all the participants are sensitized to their classmates' contexts and possible needs. For instance, although there is an electronic reserve system available to all course participants through the school's library, those who are in rural areas during the course may not be able to access physical library resources, such as entire books, which are not stored in the electronic reserve system. Class members have been known to go to the library to photocopy and scan materials to help their classmates.



In other situations, some members of the class who are more familiar with the technology coach those who are less familiar. For instance, in a synchronous Adobe Connect session, one student was able to coach another about uploading her PowerPoint slides when the technicians were not available.

In one case a student based in a developing nation had difficulties with the internet connection speed. In some instances it was better for that person if the instructor and class members sent materials to him via email because it was difficult for him to access some of the items on the course Moodle.

8. Describe how the PDO helps prepare students for the local contexts in which they will work.

Participants in the course may be physically situated in the context where they teach or plan to teach. Others, like some of the future Peace Corps Volunteers, may know what that context will be but have not yet arrived in that locale. Still others may not yet know where they will work. The various participants work (or will work) in a wide range of developed or developing nations.

As the participants complete the design of their original teacher education projects, they work to understand the culture in which the program will take place, particularly if they are not from that culture. For example, scheduling of training activities may be influenced by holy days in the local setting; training options may be influenced by local constraints (availability of electrical power, for instance); and appropriate course completion mechanisms will be culturally determined (e.g., in some cultures, having an official certificate of completion and a group photo is very important). As the students give their oral reports to their classmates, they explain the cultural context and the constraints that will influence the teacher education programs they have planned.

9. Explain the characteristics of the teacher educator(s) working in the PDO.

The professor has an MA in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) and PhD in Applied Linguistics, as well as over thirty years of ESL/EFL teaching and teacher training experience. She has also published widely on language teacher development.

Prior to offering the online version of this seminar, the professor took two courses about teaching online through the Monterey Institute. She also observed an experienced teacher educator working online on several occasions. In addition, the eventual development of the course Moodle was supported by an MIIS staff member who was herself a language teacher with a great deal of experience and expertise about teaching online.

10. Describe the non-teaching support staff in the PDO.

The professor and the course participants are supported in their use of the technology by



the MIIS Help Desk. In addition, the Director of the Digital Learning Commons is available for consultation and help as needed. Other student support (e.g., career advising) is available to all matriculated students at MIIS.

11. Explain the learning assessments used in the PDO.

There are two written assignments for this seminar. The first is a language learning and teaching history. In this narrative and reflective writing task, students try to determine how their own experiences as language learners and language teachers will influence them as teacher educators. The paper is worth 20% of the final grade.

In the second written assignment, the course participants design an original language teacher education program, and are given the freedom to choose a meaningful context according to their own career trajectories. This project begins with articulating the goals and rationale for the training program, which must work within certain realistic constraints. The paper also includes a review of relevant literature. The course participants create a syllabus, including activities, materials, and the time frame, as well as tasks and assignments for their expected trainees. Both written assignments are peer reviewed and are given substantive feedback by the instructor. This assignment is worth 60% of the final grade.

Participants are also expected to contribute regularly and thoughtfully on each Moodle discussion forum, using the following guidelines:

- Step 1. Reflect on the ideas and write and post your own original reflections on your chosen task.
- Step 2. Respond to a peer's original reflection.
- Step 3. React to any comments from your peers on your original reflection.

The Moodle participation, both quality and quantity, is worth 20% of the course grade.

12. Explain the mechanisms used to evaluate the PDO.

The seminar on language teacher education is regularly reviewed via the students' evaluation of the teaching and learning experience at the end of the course. In addition, the professor requests input at the halfway point, by posting a special discussion forum inviting the students' comments. The host MA Program is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges along with the rest of the MIIS curricula.

13. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this PDO online.

There are four main challenges involved in teaching this course online. First, the professor had to learn to use the technology and build the collection of online resources. Second, it is challenging not being able to model the training activities as easily and spontaneously as could be done in the ftf version of the course. Third, the professor spends some time helping the students learn to use the technology, particularly the Adobe Connect system. And finally, it can



be difficult to build a sense of community among students online.

To address the challenge of building community, a special discussion forum was designed as a place for students to ask questions, raise issues, voice their concerns, share ideas, and so on. Some ice-breaker activities were also included. The community-building activities are explicitly named and regularly scheduled. The class members also engage in an extensive peer review process (of the language learning and teaching history, the goals and syllabus of their original training programs, etc.).

14. Describe the successes of the PDO and explain how they are documented.

The course is evaluated through online questionnaires available to all the enrolled students. Those evaluation results are made available to the instructor after the final grades have been filed. The results of the students' evaluations of the course have consistently been rated at four or above on a five-point scale. The instructor has also been nominated for and has received teaching awards.

More importantly, many of the participants have actually been able to implement their original language teacher education programs in the contexts for which they were designed (e.g., Peace Corps assignments that involve teacher training). Others have used their projects as components of the portfolios they submit as the exit procedure mechanism for the MA program.