

The *Knowledge Base* for Language Teacher Education Revisited: A Review

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Received: April 10, 2017

Accepted: May 8, 2017

Online Published: June 28, 2017

doi:10.5430/ijelt.v4n2p27

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijelt.v4n2p27>

Abstract

The debate on the knowledge base for teacher education (TE) in general and language teacher education in particular has been going on for while with no unanimity on what it should entail. In this paper, I review literature on the issue of the knowledge base, specifically on language teacher education (LTE). The key question guiding this review is: What is the conceptual foundation of the knowledge base for LTE? This suggests that the debate needs to consider pedagogical reasoning as a core pillar of the knowledge base for LTE. At the centre of the concept of pedagogical reasoning is the need for language teachers to understand the relationships between principles and procedures of language teaching. While this paper focuses on English language, I believe that the issues raised are relevant to any other second language teaching contexts since the concept of pedagogical reasoning as a basis of the knowledge base for LTE is not limited to English Language (EL) Contexts.

Keywords: teacher education, language teaching, pedagogical reasoning, knowledge base

1. Introduction

Developments in general TE, perhaps as expected, have fundamentally influenced conceptualisations in LTE. For example, according to Richards (2008) like general teacher education, LTE also started as a distinct field of knowledge in many parts of the world in the 1960s when writers began to propose specific methods of teaching and how teachers could be prepared in such methods. Richards states that during that time, up to early 1970s, “training involved the development of a repertoire of teaching skills acquired through observing experienced teachers and practice teaching in controlled settings” (p.160). Over time, the field of LTE has expanded considerably and in the process has drawn on principles from general education, linguistics, applied linguistics and other fields such as Psychology, Sociology and even anthropology (e.g. Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kumaravadivelu, 2006b; Richards, 2008).

Also, like in general TE, it is currently more recognised in LTE that teaching is a complex job than it was previously thought to be. Consequently, in most recent literature in it is emphasised that the main business of LTE is to facilitate teacher learning (TL) defined as development of student teachers’ awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes (Freeman, 2002, 2001, 1989) and to facilitate pedagogical reasoning (Johnson, 1999; Richards, 1998). Freeman emphasises that “teacher learning is the core activity of teacher education” (2002:1) and argues that “the ways in which such learning – known as *teacher learning* (italics in original) is organized and facilitated make a difference in terms of its durability and long term efficacy” (2001:608).

Nevertheless, while scholars seem to be unanimous that teacher learning is the essence of LTE, what exactly prospective teachers need to learn - more commonly referred to as *the knowledge base for LTE*, has been a point of debate in the field. This debate has featured prominently in both theoretical and research literature in the field. For example, Morton et al. conducted a review of research literature on TE as part of a project that was focused on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). They reported that some recent research in TE e.g. Cochran-Smith (2004) were concerned with “identification of the aspects of teacher education which have the greatest measurable impact and desired outcomes, particularly on student learning” (Morton et al., 2006:20). These

writers also identified a research interest that sought to establish what teachers need to learn and therefore what should be included in TE curricula. The lack of unanimity notwithstanding, in the last two decades or so there have been several proposals (in general TE and LTE in particular) on what teachers need to learn.

Literature on knowledge base for LTE also draws considerably from general TE. One of the proposals on this issue that has been of considerable influence in the field was made by Shulman (1987). Shulman had proposed a knowledge base consisting of “content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values” (p. 8). Shulman’s framework has been cited as useful in identifying the curriculum for TE (e.g. Morton et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond 2006a & b) but has also been criticised as being rather general and suggesting a typology of learning outcomes for teachers in all contexts, a situation which may not be tenable (e.g. McCormack et al, 2006).

Shulman has since adjusted his framework considerably. In a paper titled *how and what teachers learn: a shifting perspective*, Shulman & Shulman (2004) have proposed a different model which emphasises *understanding* as the core of teacher learning. They say that teacher learners ought to be facilitated to develop an understanding of “disciplinary/content /interdisciplinary knowledge, curriculum, classroom management and organization, assessment and learners (p.262).

There have been other conceptualisations of the knowledge base for teacher learning in TE literature. Turner-Bisset (2001) suggested a knowledge base that is more or less similar to Shulman’s, though with a few additions such as “knowledge/models of teaching and knowledge of self” (p.13). A briefer framework has been proposed by Darling-Hammond (2006a:303; 2006b:83) and consists of three categories, namely: “1.Knowledge of *learners* and how they learn...2. Knowledge of *curriculum* content and goals...3. Understanding of *teaching* in light of the content and learners to be taught, as informed by assessment and supported by classroom environments”.

There have also been proposals specific to LTE; for example, Richards (1998), identified six items as making up what language teachers ought to learn. These are: *theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making; and contextual knowledge*”. Richards acknowledges that there is no unanimity on what should make up the content in SLTE and attributes this to the fact that the field ‘draws on a variety of disciplinary sources, including linguistics, psycholinguistics, and education’ (p.1). Citing a similar diversity of the sources of knowledge in ELTE, Freeman and Johnson (1998) suggested a knowledge base that they explained as follows:

The knowledge base needs to address: (a) the nature of the teacher-learner; (b) the nature of schools and schooling; and (c) the nature of language teaching, in which we include pedagogical thinking and activity, the subject matter and the content, and language learning. Taken together, these domains outline a systemic view of the knowledge-base that emphasises their constant and critical interdependence... We believe that the three domains that we propose, which we abbreviate here as the teacher learner, the social context and the pedagogical process, more accurately and appropriately capture the complex terrain in which language teachers learn (p.406)

Another proposal in ELTE has recently been suggested by Malderez & Wedell (2007). They identify three kinds of knowledge that teachers need to know which includes: “*knowing about* the subject, the aims and role of the subject within the wider curriculum... *knowing how* to use strategies to support pupils and their won learning... and *knowing to* use appropriate aspects of the other kinds of knowledge while actually teaching” (p.18). There are several other suggestions on the knowledge base for TE in general or ELTE in particular that I cannot exhaust in this review.

Based on these proposals and others that I will refer to in the rest of the paper, I suggest that the knowledge base for LTE could be considered in terms of two major components – principles and procedures of language teaching. In the next section, I briefly explain these components.

2. Principles and Procedures of Language Teaching

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006b) “two major components of any systematic learning/teaching operation are the principles that shape our concepts and convictions, and the procedures that help us to translate these principles into a workable plan in a specific classroom context” (p.89). He suggests that looking at language teacher learning in terms of principles and procedures may help in analysing or describing the activities of an LTE programme or the students involved in it. Kumaravadivelu defines these terms as follows:

The term, principles, may be operationally defined as a set of insights derived from theoretical and applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, information sciences and other allied disciplines that provide theoretical bases for the study of language learning, language planning and language teaching. The term thus includes not only the theoretical assumptions governing language learning and teaching but also those governing syllabus design, materials production, and evaluation measures. Similarly, procedures may be operationally defined as a set of teaching strategies adopted/ adapted by the teacher in order to accomplish the stated and unstated, short- and long-term goals of language learning and teaching in the classroom (p.89)

Kumaravadivelu's definitions are consistent with that of Knight (2002), another writer who also explained the difference between these two components of professional learning. Knight argued that

Analysis of knowledge often distinguish between two sorts of knowledge. One form is *procedural* or practical knowledge (italics mine) comprising sensori-motor and cognitive skills...A second is declarative, propositional or higher order knowledge. It includes...abstract knowledge of *principles*...Practical knowledge is primarily about learning to do and higher order knowledge is mainly about sense-making and meaning...The one does not guarantee the other. They area acquired, renewed and modified in different ways, which implies that where both are needed, then a range of learning methods is also needed (pp.230-231).

In summary, principles are issues that underlie and/or inform the procedures in LTE, whether implicit or explicit. Building on the review I made in the introduction to this paper, I would suggest that the principles in language teaching include knowledge of *theories* of pedagogy in LTE, knowledge of the language content (subject matter) to be taught at a particular level, knowledge of aims of LTE and knowledge of the context of LTE. I would suggest then that procedures of ELT would include knowledge of *the how* of teaching a language, which as I will explain, later includes knowledge of evaluation. Next, I review literature on these principles drawing mostly from literature in LTE and only where necessary drawing on literature in general TE. It will be clear that there are several overlaps in these principles hence there are really no hard and fast lines between them. Their categorisation in this sense is only meant to focus attention to one key issue at a time.

2.1 Theories of Pedagogy in LTE

I use the term theory to mean "abstract set of claims about the units that are significant within the phenomenon under study, the relationships that exist between them and the processes that bring about change" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:6). A theory is an effort to reach a reasonable and general set of suggestions relying on research findings, which tend to describe the phenomenon under study (Macaro, 2003). Theory tends to be concerned with general issues rather than specific issues about a phenomenon. Therefore individual cases that are not consistent with these general issues are mostly ignored. In this way, inevitably, theory can be considered as partial (Widdowson, 2003). Richards (2001; 1998), argues that ELTE is always informed by some theories whether stated explicitly or not. He states that:

At the core of SLTE is a theory of teaching that provides the theoretical basis for the program as well as the justification for both the approach to teaching as well as the instructional practices students are expected to develop in the program. Teachers also teach within the context of beliefs that shape their planning and interactive decisions. Theories of teaching are therefore central to how we understand the nature and importance of classroom practices... (1998: 2)

Many writers in LTE appear to concur that it is important to expose student teachers to the different theoretical positions that exist in the field, without necessarily prescribing one that should be followed (e.g. Macaro, 2003; Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Richards, 1998). In LTE, theory (as defined above) appears to exist at many different levels. First, there is the level of principles based on major theoretical movements in education or psychology such as Behaviourism, Cognitivism or Constructivism (Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Roberts, 1998) and the Sociocultural approach (e.g. Johnson, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Secondly, there are theories at the level of approaches and methods of teaching such as grammar translation, the audio-lingual method, natural approach or the communicative approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Thirdly there are theories at the level of what we might call *view* of teaching such as didactic, discovery or interactionist view (Richards, 1998). Still there are theories at the level of techniques for example on issues such as wait time after questions, pair of group work, explicit or implicit teaching and others (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b; Larsen-Freeman, 2002).

I do not have space to review literature on all these levels of theory. The key issue to reiterate is that it is necessary that LTE student teachers are made aware of these theories and facilitated to discuss their merits and demerits in

different circumstances and contexts. I appreciate that in some contexts, policy makers prescribe theories at different levels. For example, in the context of my study, I explained earlier that the ministry of education recommends that communicative language teaching (CLT) and the integrated approach be used in LTE. Even in such contexts, I would argue that student teachers still need to be given opportunities to discuss different options offered by the chosen approaches.

Another important part of this awareness on theories is to facilitate student teachers to bring forth and discuss the theories and beliefs that they hold from their many years as learners of English language and learners of teaching. In LTE literature, these types of beliefs based on learners' own experiences and memories of learning English language or learning to teach is referred to as *apprenticeship of observation*, a term initially coined by Lortie (1975) and which has been discussed by many writers since (e.g. Borg, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006a; Johnson, 1999; Roberts, 1998). Roberts (1998) explains that "the impact of these experiences is that student teachers come into their programmes with memories and perceptions about teachers and teaching, which may intervene in their learning to be teachers" (p.66).

While these images about how people learn and teach may enable some people to start teaching immediately after school, largely through imitation of the way they were taught, these images may not have been appropriately formed and might not be easy to change during teacher education or even actual teaching (Borg, 2004). These images "tend to support conservatism in teaching, promulgating the notion that *teachers tend to teach the way they were taught*" (Johnson, 1999:19). (Italics in original). Consequently, student teachers in teacher education programmes need to be assisted to develop awareness of their perceptions formed during the apprenticeship of observation, to think about them against what they learn in their coursework, deal with any emerging conflicts and shape alternative views (Johnson, 1999). The next issue student teachers would need to learn during an ELTE programme, according to literature is content knowledge.

2.2 Language Content (Subject Matter)

Content knowledge means the *what* of teaching - knowledge of the subject the teacher will be teaching the learners, in this case English language (EL). It includes the main topics and issues in the subject and its core divisions (Johnson, 1999). In ELTE, these might include some aspects from core linguistics such as phonetics and phonology, syntax, morphology, and language acquisition (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2006b). In some contexts, the subject matter offered to ELTE students are organised around the four skills of English though at a much more advanced level than they would teach in schools so as to give them a deeper understanding (e.g. Hinkel, 2006).

According to Shulman (1987:7) "teaching begins with a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught". Imig & Imig (2006) note that in many educational contexts "content knowledge is supreme", as it is believed that a lot of content knowledge empowers teachers. (p.288). Shulman noted that content knowledge ought to be quite deep to enable teachers relate the subject to the learners experiences. He explained further that "in the face of student diversity, the teacher must have a flexible and multi faceted comprehension, adequate to impart alternative explanations of the same concepts and principles (Shulman, 1987:9). Zeichner (2006) cites reports in the USA as evidence that teacher education ought to pay "greater attention to the content knowledge to be taught by teachers". Zeichner argues that although content knowledge need not be the sole focus of TE, many research reports in the US had shown that a lack of adequate content knowledge among graduate teachers could lead to poor teaching of the same subject.

In their review of research literature on ESOL, Morton et al (2006) also cite several research findings that support the need for student teachers to have a deep knowledge of subject matter. They report that the research raises the necessity to include systematic and dynamic content knowledge in TE programmes. They report the research as revealing that teachers who do not have adequate knowledge of subject matter tend to be confined to content as presented in textbooks and may not deal with confusions of the students on content. They report further that such teachers minimise opportunities for students to freely debate the content. The research findings however also indicate that content knowledge should be offered using methods that enable teachers to present it appropriately to their learners. They observe that "the issue is not how much subject matter is taught but how it is taught". They propose that content ought to be taught in ways which are congruent with the types of practices considered to be effective in teaching the subject to learners, while keeping in mind the obvious differences between the two contexts' (Morton et al., 2006:23).

Clearly, ELTE student teachers need to have a deep knowledge of content. Nevertheless, there are different views in the field as to what should constitute the content knowledge for ELTE students. One of the reasons for the lack of agreement is because it has now been recognised in the field that there is a difference between ELT and teaching of

linguistics, applied linguistics or second language acquisition (Freeman, 1989). Freeman argued that applied linguistics which has been considered to be the subject matter for teachers of a language “should not be the primary matter of language teacher education” (1989:29). A related important point raised in literature is that content taught to student teachers ought to be related to the subject matter that the student teachers will teach in schools (Richards, 2008).

2.3 Aims of Teaching a Language

Literature in LTE has also emphasised the need to engage student teachers in discussing aims and ends of ELT generally and also in the contexts in which they are teaching. According to Malderez & Wedell (2007:15) knowledge of aims and ends includes awareness about the “goals of education, values, philosophical and historical backgrounds”. The authors argue that the way teachers perceive the goals of education in a subject like language teaching has a considerable influence on their pedagogy.

They explain that although such aims are usually not clearly stated in document form, they may be discernible from approaches, methods and techniques of teaching and also the syllabus design. Besides the goals of teaching a subject, one can also look at knowledge of educational ends as referring to the goals of education in a society or a nation. It is important to discern whether a given society aims at producing people who will “fit into the society as it currently exists...or at actualising the potential of each individual child”. The main aims of education generally (or LTE specifically) in a society whether clearly stated or implicit will have a bearing on teacher learning and knowledge and their work with students (Malderez & Wedell, 2007: 8).

As part of aims and ends of ELTE, literature in the field also explains the need to involve student teachers in awareness and discussion of the ELT syllabus and how it relates to other subjects in the curriculum. Such discussion may also involve a discussion of the syllabus at other levels of the education structure, the examination system, and interpretation of the syllabus by the key textbooks in a particular context (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Freeman and Johnson argues that teachers should not be viewed simply as learners and implementers of content prescribed by policy makers. They need to have knowledge of curriculum matters including the ability to choose, arrange and design resources and teacher/learner activities for that content.

Darling-Hammond concurs that in spite of the existence of textbooks, teachers’ guides or teaching and learning materials, teachers still require relating these to the learner and the context of learning. Teachers need to be able to plan their lessons and organise the content according to the entry levels of learners so that they can benefit from that content. “This is not something most teachers know intuitively or learn from unguided classroom experience” (Darling-Hammond, 2006:95). Clearly, student teachers need knowledge of the ELT syllabus and curriculum in their contexts; nevertheless, TE institutions must safeguard against exposing their students to very narrow and localised aims that would make it impossible for them to work in other contexts or to adapt to any changes in ELT like those occasioned by developments in Information Communication Technology (ICT) or use of the internet (Krashen, 2008). Knowledge of context is another important aspect, as I review next.

2.4 Context of ELT

Context refers to the “ecology of learning”, that is, the classroom, the institution or the community where teaching and learning will take place (Johnson, 1999:24). According to Burns (1996) “greater attention to the social and institutional contexts of classrooms is required in studies of what teachers do” (p.98). Borg (2003) explains contextual factors as “the social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and the classroom...parents, principals’ requirements,...society, curriculum mandates, classroom and school layout, school policies, colleagues, standardised tests, and the availability of resources’ (p. 94) are important to bear in mind by LTE programmes. To Borg’s list may be added the institutional contextual factors identified by Richards (1998:12). These are:

- type of school, (e.g. state, or private, tertiary)
- administrative practices, (e.g. time management, teacher’s duties, workload),
- school culture (e.g. established beliefs and practices),
- school program (e.g. reception class, pullout class, transitional class),
- level of class (e.g. elementary, intermediate, advanced),
- teaching resources (.e.g. syllabus, textbooks and other resources), and
- testing factors (e.g. role of school and national tests).

Teachers also need to have awareness of the contextual factors beyond their institutions that may affect their pedagogy. This is because pedagogy takes place within a given society which has “governments, markets, property rights, laws, explicit and implicit practices and patterns of inequality because of race, gender, religion and disability”. Therefore teachers require the knowledge on how to discern their individual or group learners’ sociocultural contexts and the impact this has on the way they learn (Grant & Gillette, 2006:294).

These writers suggest further that one way of assisting teachers to deal with contextual matters is to encourage them to explore their own attitudes and beliefs about the context. Imig & Imig (2006) propose that for students to develop better understanding and a healthy working relationship within their sociocultural contexts, it is necessary that they participate in co-curricular activities planned in collaboration with students, before and after the lessons. They mention some of the activities as “writing groups, book clubs, and photography classes” and games (p. 289).

A key aspect of context that is identified in some TE literature as an independent aspect of the knowledge base is *learners*. Learners in this case refer to the pupils of English language that the student teachers will teach. Certainly, teachers need to know the general characteristics of their learners and the individual differences they are likely to carry (Malderez & Wedell, 2007). Teacher education programmes in turn need to enable their learners (student teachers) to develop what Grimmet & Mackinnon, cited in Darling-Hammond (2006a) call *pedagogical learner knowledge*. Darling-Hammond captures the need for this kind of knowledge (based on research on TE programmes that she carried out in USA) in the following statement:

Just as medical educators believe physicians cannot properly apply the techniques of medicine without understanding how the human body works, teacher educators in these programs believe that without direct knowledge of how learning occurs, teachers have no benchmarks by which to evaluate teaching ideas or materials, construct learning opportunities or adapt their teaching when students do not respond to a particular approach. Ensuring that teachers understand who they are teaching and how they learn empowers teachers to organise their practice around the pursuit of learning rather than just covering the curriculum or getting through the book (p.85).

Overall, in terms of context, the literature suggests the need to engage student teachers in thinking about contextual issues at the level of cultural practices, types of institutions, resources available and people involved (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b). Kumaravadivelu gives as succinct summary on contexts when he states that: “it is impossible to insulate classroom life from the dynamics of political, educational, and social institutions...” (p. 44). Ultimately, student teachers must also be facilitated to learn the actual work of teaching, as I review below.

3. Procedures of LTE

As I have already explained above, generally, procedures in LTE involve the knowledge of *how to teach a language*. I am using the phrase *how to teach* here to refer to the broader process of pedagogy including planning, actual presentation of content, classroom control, use of teaching aids or resources and formative evaluation in language teaching.

I would relate the knowledge of how to teach to what Shulman (1987) called *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) which he defined as “the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, or issues are organised, represented and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction.” (p.8). PCK has been discussed widely in general TE and LTE literature and has become rather controversial. I do not have space to engage in the debate of the notion or its relevance. My reference to it here is only as far as the notion suggests the need for student teachers to have knowledge of how to combine knowledge of content and pedagogy for the purpose of actual teaching in the classroom.

Richards (1998) partly refers to knowledge on how to teach in his category called *communication skills* which he defines as “the teachers’ capacity to express themselves clearly and effectively” (p.6). In the knowledge base proposed by Malderez & Wedell (2007), the knowledge of how to teach is addressed in both the category they call *knowing how* to teach and that of *knowing to* teach. These writers note that knowing to teach “is arguably the most important” of the three categories of knowledge they propose. They argue that “there can be little point in knowing about things and knowing how to do things if you cannot actually use this knowledge/these skills in the right place at the right time to support learning” (pp.24 – 25). However, knowledge of how to teach need not be seen narrowly in the sense of giving student teachers procedures to go and use in schools but in terms of developing an understanding of what procedures might work in different circumstances (Johnson, 1999). Johnson argues that:

New teachers need procedural knowledge about the day-to-day operations of managing and teaching... However, more importantly, they need to place this procedural knowledge... within the context of alternative models of teachers and teaching so as to avoid maintaining the status quo and, essentially, reproducing their own apprenticeship of observation (p.52).

Literature in LTE suggests that one possible way of developing student teachers knowledge of how to teach during their TE programme and which in turn prepares them for practice is *micro-teaching*. Micro teaching is defined as isolation of specific teaching behaviours that student teachers are trained to display in a 'micro' set up typically involving fewer student teachers, short duration and restricted behaviours. The behaviours taught in this manner are assumed to be transferable to the classroom (Roberts, 1998:15).

Some writers have argued that micro teaching conceived in this manner serves no meaningful purpose as it takes a narrow view of teaching which fails to recognise the complexity of the teaching process (Fish, 1989; Grossman, 1990). There is however, another view of micro-teaching which considers it as "one of a range of techniques for developing 'experiential knowledge' in a controlled and professional way" (Wallace, 1991:87). Wallace defines micro teaching as a practice activity in which teaching has been scaled down in some reasonable way for example in terms of time for the lesson, lesson topic, number of learners or all these. He justifies micro teaching as an opportunity for student teachers of language to safely experiment with teaching and in his view this experimentation does not stop the student teachers from thinking about new ways of teaching and enhancing their repertoire after they have qualified. He argues that such an opportunity has less risk and cost and therefore could offer a smooth transition to a more risky and costly learning stage for the teachers such as the practicum.

3.1 Evaluation in ELT

As I have suggested above, evaluation could be considered as an integral part of knowledge of *how to teach*. The word *evaluation* is used here to mean testing or assessment. Literature identifies two related and complementary forms of evaluation: testing of the learners and self-evaluation by the student teachers. To start with the former, It is suggested that student teachers mainly require the skill of formative assessment which is a continuous process of finding out if the learning outcomes the teacher had in mind in a particular lesson, topic or skill are being met (Darling-Hammond, 2006b).

Formative assessment has been cited to be of value to both the teacher and the learner. This ought to be perceived not simply as the technical task of how to assign grade but developing student teachers' understanding of how to continuously assess their learners and also to use the assessments as a guide to improvement of their practice (Intrator, 2006). Maclellan (2004) argues that testing is also an important source of feedback to learners, their guardians and other stakeholders in the education process. He suggests that student teachers need to be supported during their TE to develop a clear rationale and deeper understanding of the testing process as it forms an important aspect of their teaching. Equally important is that student teachers develop awareness of the possible impact of summative assessment in terms of national examinations at the end of the course on their pedagogy and also how they might prepare learners for such summative exams without making it the primary focus of their teaching (Roberts, 1998; Stimpson, 2000).

The skill of *self-evaluation* has been defined in ELTE literature as involving checking on one's own progress in learning teaching (Bailey, 2006). That is, how effectively do they feel they are teaching what they have set out to teach? This involves being able to look back to their pedagogy *locally* and *globally* to check if there are any aspects they ought to improve. Locally means in relevance to specific lessons that they are teaching and globally means broader aspects of teaching such as planning, presentation techniques and even testing of learners (Stimpson et al, 2000). Richards (2008) suggests that "measures are needed that involve teachers in self evaluation, that enable them to monitor their growth and development over time through the use of self-directed activities such as portfolios, narratives, and journal writing" (p173)

Bailey (2006) encouragement of student teachers in self evaluation, arguing that it is a way of entrusting language teachers with their own learning and that through this they may realise that the other participants are only trying to support their own efforts to learn from the practicum experiences. She also argues that through self-evaluation, the student teachers might themselves identify aspects of their teaching that they may wish to discuss with their supervisors, in the process making the supervisor's task relatively easier. She cautions, however that this is not always the case and the student teachers need to be supported in the self-evaluation process as well.

Ultimately, the gist of my argument in this paper is that there is need to consider pedagogical reasoning as the core pillar of the knowledge base for LTE. Next, I review literature on the concept of pedagogical reasoning and explain why it needs to form the core of LTE.

4. Pedagogical Reasoning in LTE

Richards (1998) identifies pedagogical reasoning skills as a key aspect of the knowledge base for SLTE. He defines Pedagogical Reasoning Skills (PRS) as the “complex cognitive skills that underlie teaching skills and techniques (p.10)...the specialised thinking and problem solving skills that teachers call upon when they teach” (p.86). Richards built on Shulman’s (1987) earlier conceptualisation of the term pedagogical reasoning.

Shulman had defined PRS as “the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented to the students” (p.15). Both Richards and Shulman argue that pedagogical reasoning is the main principle on which teaching is based. Richards points out that while it is generally assumed that student teachers learn pedagogical reasoning skills during the ITE programmes, whether this actually happens is “seldom explored” (p.86). He explains that the SLTE ought to develop student teachers pedagogical reasoning so that they are able to:

- relate theories of language, teaching and learning to language teaching in actual situations,
- analyse pedagogical problems and develop alternative strategies for teaching,
- recognise the kind of decision making employed in teaching and to utilise decision making effectively in one’s own teaching (p.15).
- learn to think about the subject matter from the learners’ perspective,
- acquire a deeper understanding of the subject matter,
- learn how to present subject matter in appropriate ways,
- learn how to integrate language learning with broader curricular goals (p.97-98)

Another writer who has written elaborately about pedagogical reasoning (PR) as an important aspect of teacher knowledge is Johnson (1999). Johnson, like Richards, argues that “reasoning teaching lies at the core of both learning to teach and understanding teaching” (p.1). She justifies the need for reasoning by the fact that teaching is a complex interrelationship between several variables including the teacher herself/himself, learners, the context, the curriculum and other factors. Johnson also identifies questions that might guide a teacher in learning the skill of pedagogical reasoning. She explains that such questions are neither hierarchical nor fixed but could be expanded as student teachers discuss with peers or teacher educators. The guiding questions are listed as follows:

- Whom am I as a teacher?
- Who are my students? How do they experience my teaching?
- What do I know about my teaching context?
- What do I know about the subject matter content that I teach?
- Why do I teach the way I do?
- What are the consequences of my teaching practices for my students?
- How do I make sense of theoretical knowledge?
- Who is my professional community?
- What sort of change do I see as fit for my own teaching? (p.139).

In a recent publication entitled *Understanding Language Teaching: from Method to Postmethod*, Kumaravadivelu (2006b) also emphasises that fostering reasoning ought to be the key goal in language teacher learning. He argues from the point of view that different contexts pose unique challenges for ELT; hence no teaching methods could be practised universally. In line with that argument, Kumaravadivelu has suggested that the field of LTE is in a *postmethod* era when the main challenge that LTE programmes ought to deal with is how to develop student teachers’ reasoning skills in language teaching. He argues that:

The challenge, of course, is how to meet the demands the concept of postmethod makes in its effort to advance a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local,

linguistic, Sociocultural, and political realities. And, how to help prospective and practicing teachers acquire and sharpen the knowledge, skill, attitude and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice (pp.224-225).

The concept of pedagogical reasoning is, arguably, consistent with Shulman and Shulman's (2004) recent concept of *understanding*, which I reviewed earlier in this section (see 2.3.1). It also includes the pedagogical issues raised in the three categories of the knowledge base proposed by Darling-Hammond, (2006b) also reviewed earlier. Furthermore, I would argue that the concepts of *knowing about*, *knowing how* and *knowing to* teach as espoused by Malderez and Wedell (2007) are somewhat subsumed in the concept of pedagogical reasoning.

In my view, the concept of pedagogical reasoning is in line with current understanding of how teachers learn as captured in recent LTE literature. That literature shows that the field no longer approves of the theory – application approaches where teachers are supposedly taught best methods to go and apply in schools. The field of LTE currently views teachers as thinking beings with beliefs about their work who need to be supported to reason their work and broaden their understanding of ELT (e.g. Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Richards, 2008). I will come back to some of this literature further later in relation to how teachers learn during TP (see 2.4.2).

Another development in ELTE that could be said to be consistent with the concept of pedagogical reasoning is the notion of *reflection*. Reflection is another term in ELTE that has been defined and used variously in different contexts and has which does not have a unanimous definition in the field (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Morton et al. 2006; Korthagen, 2001).

Here I am defining the term as the ability of the student teacher to reason about his or her teaching in terms of how s/he has taught, weigh all the circumstances influencing that teaching and make a decision on how they could improve the subsequent lessons. In a nutshell, I am defining the term reflection as *reasoning of* teaching (Johnson, 1999; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Korthagen, 2001). The notion of reflection can be traced to Dewey (1933), cited by several writers on this subject such as Roberts (1998); Bartlett (1990); and Korthagen (2001). Dewey had defined reflective thought as:

active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends, (p.9) ... Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a con-sequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each idea determines the next as its proper outcome, while each outcome in turn leans back on, or refers to, its predecessors (p.4).(Dewey, 1933:4-9; cited in Korthagen, 2001:54)

Dewey's ideas were developed and popularised in the field of TE in the 1980s and since then reflection has become a household word in teacher education; as a result of research activities aimed at identifying good teaching activities (Bartlett, 1990; Roberts, 1998). Currently, reflection is seen as an activity whose goal is to enable teachers think of how could make the learning experiences more meaningful to the learners (Grant & Gillette, 2006). In the process the teacher is also enabled to reason their own practice thereby possibly developing a deeper understanding of language teaching (Korthagen, 2001).

Reflection as a goal of teacher education is thus considered to be a recognition of the fact that in teaching “professional competence is gained as part of an autonomous process...one in which an individual has some personal control. It is therefore a democratic version of the professional” (Grenfell, 1998:15). I will return to the issue of reflection when I explore how student teachers may learn during teaching practice (see 2.4.2.4). My point in the above short review on reflection is to draw a similarity between pedagogical reasoning and some tenets of the notion of reflection.

Finally, another development in TE that may be considered consistent with the concept of pedagogical reasoning is the notion of experiential learning. Experiential learning has also been defined variously by various writers. The basic tenet in the concept however is that experience plays an important role in professional learning (Kohonen, 2001; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004)). Kolb who is cited in TE literature as perhaps the originator of the concept of experiential learning argued that in this theory “learning is described as a process whereby concepts are derived from and re-formed through experience” (1984: 28).

The relationship between the notion of experiential learning and pedagogical reasoning is the acknowledgement by its proponents that “experience alone is not, however, a sufficient condition for learning. Experiences also need to be processed consciously by reflecting on them” (Kohonen, 2001:27). Kohonen's views have been supported by another writer on experiential learning who has argued that people learn professional work such as teaching “by noticing and framing problems of interest to them in particular ways, and then inquiring and experimenting with solutions”

(Fenwick, 2000:249). Fenwick identifies reasoning as a key activity before and after such experimentation and suggests that it is that deliberate reasoning about one's own practice that facilitates learning.

5. Conclusion

In summary, it is this effort to link principles and procedures in teaching that has been referred to in literature as *pedagogical reasoning* (Johnson, 1999; Maclellan, 2004; Richards, 1998). Johnson advocates for engaging student teachers on reasoning about principles simultaneously as they learn procedures of teaching in language teaching. She argues that "if we recognise teaching as a highly situated and interpretive activity, then knowing what to do in any classroom hinges on the robustness of a teacher's reasoning" (p.10). Therefore, I would argue that the concept of pedagogical reasoning brings together all the aspects of the knowledge base in LTE and embodies both the content and process of teacher learning in LTE. That is, pedagogical reasoning as a concept, draws the attention of the LTE educator to the principles and procedures (and the links between them) that language teachers need to know and which we need to address during the TE programme, while at the same time it is also a way of preparing the teachers. In other words there is need to prepare LTE students by involving them in reasoning about what the *reasons* behind their pedagogy.

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