

國立清華大學 命題紙

97 學年度 外國語文學 系(所) 外語教學 組碩士班入學考試

科目 英文閱讀與寫作 科目代碼 4103 共 4 頁第 1 頁 *請在【答案卷卡】內作答

Part I Following are some reasons that teachers have given for not wanting to participate in professional development activities. Choose ONE of the reasons and write a counterargument based on it in favor of professional development. **40 points.**

- a. No motivation: I am not clear on the purposes and benefits
- b. Dislike of theories and experts: I think teaching is all about practice. Theory has little to do with it.
- c. Dislike of fashions and fads: Professional development is just another temporary trend.
- d. Interference with the teaching process: Professional development is a distraction.
- e. Resistance to change: There is no reason to change my teaching; it works for me.
- f. Fear of confronting the self: I am afraid of seeing aspects of myself I may not like. (adapted from Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan, 2001)

Part II. This section has two parts.

A. First, read the following passage and write a summary of it (no more than about 200 words). **30 points.**

B. Second, think about the teaching situation in Taiwan (or the region you are most familiar with) and suggest what you think administrators should do **in that context** to help teachers minimize burnout. **30 points.**

My Path to Burnout by Joanne Sellen, Essential Teacher March 2007, pp. 22-24.

A student sat across from me struggling to suppress her tears while she explained that her parents did not have the money to support her for another semester of English study. I felt nothing as I handed her a tissue. I had to face the fact that I had nothing to give. I was burned out. To have any integrity, I felt I had to get out of the classroom.

My burnout developed slowly. I began my career in higher education ESL as any new professional would: eager and enthusiastic. To be as innovative as I could, I spent hours preparing materials, reviewing lesson plans, and keeping up on ideas that would inspire my teaching. I marked every mistake on students' assignments. I met my students for office hours and patiently explained those mistakes again and again.

I cared for my job and career as people care for their bodies; I exercised by trying new approaches. I increased my flexibility by asking for new assignments. As the years passed, Asia had its crisis, the Twin Towers in New York were attacked, the Iraq war was planned and shots were fired, visas became harder for students to obtain, the threat of SARS appeared in Asia, and cows turned mad. Enrollments in many U.S. ESL programs fell, and teachers faced increased teaching loads with no pay increases. Teaching and program decisions became based more on economic survival and less on good pedagogy or learners' needs.

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At the same time, my personal economy changed. A mortgage and children siphoned my energy away from students who had planned and saved to enter my classroom. I became less patient. I tired of explaining the same grammar points over and over again. I tired of reading students' attempts at writing and assigned the minimum tasks required. I felt no remorse as I walked into classrooms and coldly returned papers with poor grades and scant remarks about areas that needed improvement. I also secretly resented students showing up for office hours. When my children were born, I was able to take some time off. I worked part-time, but my enthusiasm for teaching waned. I wanted to do work other than teaching. I took an administrative job and hated it. I spent a year doing instructional design for courses and, surprisingly, realized I missed the contact with students. After another year of rest, I returned to the classroom with some of the verve I had had after graduate school.

But it wasn't until my children entered school that the enormity of what I had been going through hit me. I looked at them and silently prayed that they would have teachers who cared about them, respected them, and would be honest enough to leave the classroom if they were burned out. The adult ESL learners who go to other countries to further their educational goals are someone's children, too. I owe those learners the same level of integrity that I expect from my children's teachers.

A Shrinking World

As a result of my burnout, my world outside of work became smaller. Teaching is hard work, and language teaching is especially demanding. I suddenly refused to socialize with individuals who were too shy and quiet or who found it too difficult to carry on a conversation. In my defense, I explained to my husband that my job was to get students to produce language. If native speakers could not do this easily, I had no energy in my free time to socialize with them.

As I learned about teacher burnout, I realized I had displayed the three domains that Maslach (1982) describes in *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*: depersonalization, in which I had distanced myself from my students and colleagues; reduced personal accomplishment, in which I did not value my work with my colleagues; and, finally, emotional exhaustion (Maslach and Schaufeli 1993).

The sad truth is that burnout affects all aspects of teachers' work and personal lives, not just their direct contact with students. When teachers become emotionally detached from their work and colleagues, their general ability to work with others disintegrates. Their ability to treat others with respect is lessened. I have witnessed intercollegial behavior that others have labeled *unprofessional* when, in reality, the teachers were burning out. The symptoms include an unwillingness to do the extra tasks that make programs exceptional, such as celebrating cultural diversity with students; attending field trips; or making the effort to highlight and attend important lectures, films, and events. Without these activities, programs are weakened, the word gets out, and students go elsewhere.

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The Causes of Burnout

Burnout is not something teachers want to discuss openly. Many are afraid of being judged by their colleagues. It implies a weakness, a level of emotionality that has no place in the workplace. As Maslach (1982) writes, people tend to blame those who are burned out for their condition. "Something about *them* as people, some personal flaw, must be the source of their soured altruism—or so we think" (p. 9). Maslach, by contrast, shifts the focus from who has burnout to what is causing burnout. The nature of language teaching might be one cause of burnout in the profession. (See Dorothy Zemach's "Burnout from Teaching," *Essential Teacher*, September 2006.) Language teaching requires great patience. Adult learners may make slow progress that is not easily visible at the end of each day. Once a teacher who left the profession told me he preferred to leave because he was "results oriented." I smiled because I understood precisely what he was saying. He gained my respect for being honest with himself. Maslach and Leiter (1997) describe the causes of burnout, each of which can be applied to the teaching of ESL.

Overload. Most teachers in any setting feel overloaded, but after the international crises of the 1990s and events at the turn of the twenty-first century, ESL teachers were forced to take on heavier teaching loads to stay employed. With too many contact hours and less preparation time, teachers work longer hours and take more work home.

Lack of Autonomy. Teachers have had to accept decisions based on economics and efficiency and made by administrators who have little knowledge of language acquisition or the economies of international students. For language programs to remain intact, class sizes are often increased, and the levels of the courses are often collapsed. This prevents some students from studying language at their placement levels, causing their progress to slow.

Stagnant Salaries. Because most public university language programs serve students who are not yet admitted to the university, they are self-supporting and unfunded by central administrations. Raises must be generated by the number of full-time students enrolled or by increases in tuition rates. (See also Dorothy Zemach's "Not in It for the Money," *Essential Teacher*, December 2006.) Neither of these has been easy to achieve since September 11, 2001, because students can find cheaper tuition and obtain visas more easily in other English-speaking countries, such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

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ESL's Marginalized Position. Inside the university academy, ESL is viewed as remedial work that is to be completed before a student enters a degree granting program. ESL programs are often housed in the least desirable and most isolated buildings on campuses. Teachers are not often included on university wide committees that make significant decisions because many work part-time. Unless a department depends on international student enrollment, such committees may ignore the need to internationalize campuses and the changes necessary to draw international scholars if ESL professionals are not represented.

Clash of Values. Teachers know that classes should be small, students should be tested and placed into levels appropriate for their abilities, and the curriculum should match students' needs and interests. However, in the effort to address the issues associated with thinning budgets, programs may not give priority to these values.

Needed: An Ounce of Administrative Prevention

Most of what TESOL professionals can do to prevent burnout is instinctual. An abundance of resources are available in a variety of professions to help employees deal with stress and burnout on a personal level. However, managing burnout has much to do with decisions made at administrative levels. Although administrators cannot do much about the effects of the world economy and the political climate on international scholarship, they can do a great deal institutionally to help teachers in ESL programs ride out tough times.

I was lucky enough to work under an administrator who truly wanted to help teachers stay in the profession and was willing to give me leave to recover. I was also encouraged to continue professional development, which gave me the feeling that I was able to accomplish more in my career. [...] Administrators need to take burnout seriously and to recognize the ways in which policies may be contributing to burnout. I am saddened as I watch talented teachers leave the profession, exhausted not only from the work of teaching, but also from the unending anxiety over enrollment and the insecurity of employment. However, mostly I am saddened for the students who lose the opportunity to learn from them. These students deserve to be taught by ESL instructors whose passion for teaching is rekindled by professional development and who gain professional respect from their institutions.

(References deleted for space considerations)