

Emerging Selves in Systems of Professional Development

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Surely, the teacher himself must first begin to see. He must be constantly alert, intensely aware of his own thoughts and feelings, aware of the ways in which he is conditioned, aware of his activities and his responses; for out of this watchfulness comes intelligence, and with it a radical transformation in his relationship to people and things. (Krishnamurti, 1973, p.65)

Before addressing the opening quote, let me begin by acknowledging the fact that I am a freshman. This is my first semester to work for Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS); this is my first semester to work for a university located within Japan; and moreover, this is my first semester to live and work in a foreign country. As such, it goes without saying that I should have plenty of things to reflect on in this short essay. However, I would like to dedicate the following text to reflecting on a commonly referred to issue in language teaching that I believe the opening quote eloquently frames. That is the role of self in teacher professional development.

I have found it difficult to discuss common courses with colleagues. Many reasons can be attributed to this. In my professional experience, I always faced time constraints working for several institutions concurrently, dashing back and forth between them. I know that this scenario undoubtedly compromised time spent with colleagues while I was teaching within several departments. My current colleagues may ridicule me for saying so, but I think I may be grateful for the eight-hour work day. I now feel as if I am able to converse about matters concerning the courses we teach and education in general, quite unlike the scenario I allude to above. Doing so is learning about teaching and learning (Lyons and

LaBoskey, 2002, p.2) which contributes to the dynamic processes one must undertake to develop a personal pedagogy. Imaginably most teachers would like to (re)define their beliefs and practices in this way even though they often must work from one lesson to the next. However at KUIS, the professional development and social activities provide a unique opportunity to reflect on teaching and other scholarly activities. I am excited to see how these activities will be reflected in my teaching and research later on.

KUIS is a think tank. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to explore issues related to language learning and teaching (LLT) through a variety of formalized mediums such as workshops and grants towards research. These are tremendous resources that let the mind run wild with ideas and that are mutually influenced by and influencing LLT. I found myself captured by the dizzying array of professional development services offered to teachers here and consequently forgot something very important: "I am teacher!" My department has established curricula to be used with the teacher's discretion, yet I was not using my discretion. I failed to enact the belief that curricula are only as effective as teachers' interpretation of them in consideration of his/her class participants. Jersild (1955) said that a search for meaning entails a search for the self (p.78) and in problematizing my courses and curricula I enact the important role of myself in the professional development system that exists here. KUIS is as fantastic a place for us to develop professionally as it is so for the students; this much is obvious. What is not obvious is that to realize the full potential of these professional development services, I need to continuously reflect upon my roles, because there are many here for me.

Why write about such an intuitive topic as the role of self in professional development? Well, I think our beliefs are as instrumental as any services are in

regards to professional development. In fact, systems *serve* to co-construct our emerging selves as we can become interlocutors in the process of our own learning and professional development (Clark and Florio-Ruane, 2001, p.4). For me, I realize this in conversing about teaching and learning with my colleagues; exploring what works and does not work in my classes through journal writing; and sharing gained insights with others as is uniquely required by my job description. But, this surely starts with the teacher's search for meaning, because it he/she who must first begin to see.

References

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