

From Trainee to Teacher: Reflective Practice for Novice Teachers

Thomas S. C. Farrell

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Farrell's book, *From Trainee to Teacher: Reflective Practice for Novice Teachers*, fills a key knowledge gap in the TESL profession; namely, capturing the experience of teachers in their first year. Farrell himself points out that "not many studies exist about what novice ESL teachers actually experience in their first year" (p. 14). Farrell's book is a response to this troublesome deficiency in our professional literature.

Farrell investigates the experience of three female novice ESL teachers. The study documents their experience over one semester (12 weeks) as they reflect on their work together with a facilitator (the author) (p. 17). Farrell organizes the book into ten chapters, starting with an overview of the profession (Chapter 1: Teaching: A Profession That Eats Its Young) and then proceeding to address key topics in the development of novice ESL teachers. Each chapter includes Reflective Breaks (highlighted in grey in the book), which present thought-provoking questions for the reader to consider.

Farrell offers a "no-holds barred" analysis of the novice teachers' experience, beginning with an exploration of the shock of entering the profession following a teacher education program. He documents the participants' experience of beginning "to wonder why they chose teaching as a career" (p. 35). He goes on to explore how novice teachers can develop awareness about the profession in their first few weeks on the job (Chapter 4) and how novice teachers can learn classroom management (Chapter 5) and evaluate lessons (Chapter 6). Farrell addresses the important topic of professional role identity in Chapter 7, noting that "as novice teachers are being challenged from the moment they enter the classroom in their first year, they inevitably encounter issues and events that make them reflect on the various roles they take or are given at the time" (p. 85). The concluding chapters focus on deep, authentic reflection of specific areas of professional practice, such as teaching style (Chapter 8), teacher education (Chapter 9), and reflective practice during the first year (Chapter 10).

The book concludes with an affirmation of the usefulness of novice teacher reflection groups, noting that such groups can fulfill a need not otherwise met by formal induction programs or appointed mentors (p. 136). Farrell's final words focus on helping novice teachers make "a smooth and successful transition into their new career as professionally qualified ESL teachers" (p. 136).

Farrell supports his study with six pages of additional sources listed in the references, including works that document the historical context of teacher preparation, as well as numerous relevant sources published in re-

cent years. The book contains seven tables and nine figures to supplement the prose.

Farrell's book is profoundly honest. He presents evidence to substantiate what both practitioners and administrators know anecdotally: that the first year of teaching is shockingly different from what teacher education programs have prepared trainees for. The findings that Farrell shares in this book contribute to the much-needed dialogue about teacher education and retention, with a unique focus on teachers of English as a second language.

The methodology, data collection, and analysis are thorough and substantive. The progression of chapters is logical and natural. The prose is highly readable and the research findings are presented in such a way that they are easily digestible for both researchers and practitioners.

If there is one shortcoming of the book worth mentioning, it is that the sample size used for the study was very small, with only three participants. As a reader, I was hungry for more. Nevertheless, the ideas and evidence create a space for provocative dialogue on how we educate teachers now and how we can do it better. While Farrell's book stands on its own as a significant contribution to the field, it may also provide a solid foundation for a much-needed larger-scale study, which would enrich the dialogue even further.

Although Farrell concludes his book with a declaration of the usefulness of novice teacher reflection groups, I have yet to see such groups implemented in the wider professional practice. The book respectfully challenges program designers and instructors of teacher education programs to consider how we can more effectively support novice colleagues in our profession.

Overall, this book is a must read for novice ESL teachers, as well as those who teach in and design teacher preparation programs.

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The Reviewer

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