Hit the Road, Jack
CATESOL State Conference 2018, Anaheim

Donna M. Brinton, Educational Consultant
Los Angeles, CA

HIT THE ROAD, JACK!

Donna M. Brinton
Educational Consultant
Los Angeles, CA
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Overview

- Professional development in ELT
- One teacher’s journey
- Why hit the road?
- Options for employment abroad
- The value of sponsored opportunities
- Some caveats

Professional development in ELT

Full-time ELT positions, especially those with benefits, are at a premium in our economic times.

For novice teachers, breaking into the market can be a daunting task given their lack of prior teaching experience.

This session presents a range of alternatives for teachers (novice and other) who seek to enhance their CV by securing sponsored jobs abroad.

Opening thoughts

Professional development in ELT

Timely advice?

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Critical in the pursuit of employment is professional development, which entails a balance of:

1. Engaging with other teachers and
2. Pursuing independent professional learning

Crandall & Finn Miller (2014)

Professional development is an elusive term in education. To many, the term conjures up images of in-service days and workshops. To others, it refers to a process in which teachers work under supervision to gain tenure or to enhance their professional practice. [Here], professional development is defined as an ongoing learning process in which teachers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. Professional development is not a one-shot, one-size-fits-all event, but rather an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection, and growth that yields the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice and when focused on job-embedded responsibilities.


Krista’s beginnings in ELT

A path toward professional development

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Krista’s beginnings in ELT

- Undergraduate journalism major at Hampshire College, Amherst, MA
- Enrollment in 2013 (at the end of her junior year) in a 120-hour intensive TESOL Certificate course offered through Hampshire College
- Graduation from Hampshire, June 2014
- Decision to focus on ELT opportunities to develop self professionally, with the long-term goal of a career in journalism and/or international relations

Certificate course assignments

- Reflective Journal
- Reading Response Forum
- Group Lesson Plan
- Demonstration of Method
- Microteaching
- Individual Lesson Plan

Course assignments, cont’d.

- *Strategic Plan for Professional Development
- Guided Literature Review
- Observations
- *Professional Development Artifact
- *Final Portfolio
- *Reflective Cover Piece
Krista’s strategic plan

Overall, my plan encompasses a need for more international encounters, in general, and a desire to teach abroad, more specifically… I will strengthen my skills in areas ranging from education to language to international relations… This plan fulfills both a desire to achieve certain personal experiences in addition to particular skills that will aid me in any career. My plan gets more vague as it reaches further into the future… Therefore, it will be important for me to revisit my plan as I see how successful I am in pursuing these programs.

Strategic plan, continued

I will apply to a Fulbright ETA in Thailand, EPIK, JET, Peace Corps and likely other programs as I continue to learn more about the opportunities available… I am most excited about an opportunity at a Bi-National Center in Santa Cruz, Bolivia… I will take full advantage of the opportunities available before I graduate. I hope to be accepted to take Thai language in preparation for my Fulbright application… I also hope to apply to study Latin American Spanish through the Fluenz software to prepare for the possibility of going to Bolivia.

Krista’s artifacts

Instructor evaluation

Krista was a highly engaged course participant who brought to the course a true exuberance for language learning and teaching… [She] was intensely goal-directed and made use of all available opportunities to professionalize herself by engaging with the discipline of TESOL and researching possible future opportunities to teach English abroad.
Binational Centers (BNCs) represent autonomous institutions dedicated to providing high-quality instruction in English and promoting mutual understanding between a given country and the United States.

In addition to hands-on learning, interactive opportunities, and cultural and alumni programs, many BNCs provide advising and recruitment services for study and exchange programs in the U.S. BNCs possess independent financial and administrative management.
I was never supposed to study international relations. Growing up on a small dairy farm, the rest of the world felt far away. Everyday after school, however, my Italian immigrant grandmother would pick me up from the bus and tell me stories of her hometown and her escape from war. I didn’t have the opportunity to travel until many years later, but her stories inspired me to study foreign countries and languages. As an undergraduate student, I examined cultures through the lens of writing. Since graduating and teaching abroad in three nations, my on-the-ground experiences have propelled me not only to read and write about the world, but also to dig deeper. My father assures me that I still have the option of converting the dairy operation into a successful sheep farm. I have other plans.

I am taking a step towards advocating for a new U.S. foreign policy in which American hegemony and the reliance on military power give way to internationalism and diplomatic tools. My experiences as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Thailand and a Peace Corps Volunteer in China have placed me in the center of American public diplomacy efforts. I’ve seen how personal relationships and long-term engagement are increasingly pushed aside. By concentrating in American Foreign Policy, I will strengthen my ability pursue a career in diplomacy that works to counter militarization with soft power, including the quantitative skills to monitor and evaluate programs that are inherently difficult to measure.

**Stage 5: Graduate study cont’d.**

The two main routes to securing a job abroad involve (1) self-arranged jobs and (2) jobs obtained through government- or institutionally-affiliated sponsors.
Sponsored teaching opportunities
Why sponsored?

A particularly promising avenue of professional development for novice (and experienced!) teachers involves seeking employment abroad via governmental- or institutionally-sponsored teaching opportunities.

ADVANTAGES
- Impact on CV
- Sponsor support (transportation, housing, etc.)
- Onsite training and supervision
- Financial benefits (e.g., salary, severance pay)
- Other support (e.g., medical insurance, visa assistance)

DISADVANTAGES
- Need for advance planning
- Often arduous application process
- Competitive selection process
- Academic requirements
- Fixed term of assignment

SELECTED APPLICATION OPTIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Destination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International School Alliance China</td>
<td>English Program in Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Open Doors Chile</td>
<td>Japan Exchange Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>ConversaSpain</td>
<td>Language Corps</td>
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<td>Cultural Ambassadors</td>
<td>Central European Teaching Program</td>
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<td>Teach and Learn with Georgia</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant Program in France</td>
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<td>Centers for Interamerican Studies</td>
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<td>WorldTeach</td>
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<td>English Language Fellows Program</td>
<td>Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program</td>
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<td>Government Teaching Jobs Aroad</td>
<td>Teach for All</td>
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Although aimed primarily at novice teachers, my thoughts apply to experienced teachers who may be looking for a new teaching adventure.

- Flexibility and patience are key to adjusting to a new environment. Don’t expect everything to go smoothly, especially initially.
- Inevitably, people who seek out sponsored teaching opportunities say they are life-changing experiences. Seriously consider the options presented!

References


