2012 TESOL International Association Professional Development Needs Survey

Key Trends in Adult ESL

TESOL International Association conducted surveys of TESOL members and nonmembers in January and February 2012 to learn more about the professional development needs of specific groups within the English language teaching field. The surveys included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Key trends from the survey on adult ESL are provided below.

Respondents to the adult ESL survey

This survey was sent to TESOL members and nonmembers in traditional core ESL countries who had adult ESL selected in their TESOL profile.

- Of the 384 respondents, most were TESOL members (86%) as well as members of their local TESOL affiliate (57%).

- Most of the respondents were from the United States (88%) and very experienced in the field, with a majority having more than 6 years of experience teaching adult ESL. Many hold a master’s degree in TESOL (51%) or in another content area (30%).

Key trends and concerns

Finances

- There is a lack of funding for adult ESL programs and there are compensation issues especially for adjuncts. Here are two sample comments:

  *Being an adjunct faculty is a terrible job. Low pay, no benefits, few or no opportunities for full-time work.*
  *I do not have the resources and physical space to appropriately meet my professional needs and my students’ instructional needs.*

Teaching

- A variety of strategies and modes of teaching are used in adult ESL education, such as face-to-face instruction, blended or online instruction, single-level or multilevel classes, English-only, or bilingual instruction.

- Multi-leveled classrooms, student attendance, and lack of time to do work outside of class are challenges in adult ESL education contexts. Some sample comments from respondents:
The [insufficient] amount of time and resources that individuals [students] can devote to language learning and improving their communication skills.

Varied attendance makes curriculum planning difficult. Varied levels in one class. Lack of knowledge of students about other cultures.

- As shown in Figure 1, lack of appropriate funding and support for professional development and teaching materials, and other factors, such as large class sizes, impact the quality of teaching.

![Figure 1: What Impacts the Quality of Teaching](image)

**Professional development**

- There is a lack of funding and support for professional development.
- Webinars, in-person workshops, and books are preferred formats for professional development. TESOL Convention workshops were identified as useful. Here are two comments:

  *Several sessions at the TESOL convention in 2011 which, together, helped me totally revamp my teacher training course.*

  *The webinar format is most practical for me because I live in a rural area. The problem is the time they are offered doesn't always coincide with my schedule. I would prefer being able to access them both live and archived.*

- Respondents suggested a wide variety of topics for future professional development including teaching core skills and incorporating technology in the classroom.