Teachers and Their Professional Associations

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This study explores the case of KOTESOL and other teacher organizations around the globe, particularly in EFL settings (emerging circles of English): how a teachers' association can support teachers, what teachers seek from their professional societies, and how teachers can support organizations that support teachers. Combining the scholarly literature, contacts with other TESOL-type teacher associations, and pilot surveys of members and stakeholders in ELT around the world provide invaluable insights often missed in narrower perspectives.

Keywords: language teacher association, support, community of practice, professional society

INTRODUCTION

Many teach in isolation. As "Master of the Classroom," there may be little empathy from other classroom participants and school administrators, and input from fellow teachers may be infrequent or even unwelcomed. This can be even truer in settings where foreign teachers work with minimal support and face language barriers. Thus, many teachers look beyond the walls of their school for pedagogical, scholarly, and socio-emotional support. While the teachers' lounge, local pub, or community sports club may meet needs for socialization and casual discussions on classroom matters − which we might refer to as "little 'a' association" (see Dickey, 2014) − it is generally left to scholarly/ professional/academic societies ("big 'A' associations") to address pedagogical, scholarly, and yes, many socio-emotional needs of teachers. Korea TESOL (KOTESOL) summarizes this mutual support system

under the phrase "teachers helping teachers" (http://koreatesol.org). These "communities of practice" for language teachers come in many forms, with various aims and objectives; surveying the wider scope of language teacher associations (LTAs) is the focus in this preliminary study. I ask teachers, look in the literature, and check some of the claims and services of various teacher-societies, to see how well we, as LTAs, do. How do KOTESOL members' views align with the roles commonly defined for LTAs? This preliminary study on members and their societies builds upon previous studies by other researchers and is part of an ongoing series of studies on language teacher associations by this researcher.

Professionals and Their (Professional and Academic) Societies

Locally trained and licensed professionals have needs, and numerous local agencies and societies are available to address these needs. For licensed professionals, membership in a licensing or regulatory organization may be compulsory – examples include lawyers, doctors, and licensed accountants (Lamb, 2012). Other licensed professionals may not be required to join a professional society, but these groups exist for purposes of continuing professional education as well as fun conventions. Teachers may join societies catering to their teaching subject; there may be multiple (and competing) groups across local, state, and national, and even international boundaries. Some may focus more towards scholarly advancement, while others have more pedagogical orientations. Similarly, groups may target narrower sub-fields – in the English subject area, we can find groups specializing in grammar, in the teaching of literature, in the study of Hamlet, as well as cross-disciplinary fields such as Chomskyan linguistics, psycholinguistics, language testing, or media-assisted language learning. Teacher associations may also be focused on labor matters (essentially, labor unions) and/or principally oriented to public policy issues reaching beyond the classroom – but these groups are largely beyond the scope of this study.

We might wish to differentiate "scholarly societies" from academic and professional societies or associations, as well as distinguishing these from licensing authorities and government-led training agencies. Distinctions may not be clear-cut, but considerations could include a focus on "advancing the science," "advancing the profession," "protecting those outside the field," and "protecting those within the field" (see

American Speech Language Hearing Association [n.d.] for a simple chart that helps clarify some of the distinctions between labor unions and professional associations). For simplicity's sake, we will observe that scholarly or "learned" societies are principally oriented towards the advancement of studies specific to their field (often through their own journal and convention; see Fitzpatrick [2012], Willinsky [2005]), professional societies are mainly driven by the needs and wants of their members as practitioners (and this may include continuing professional development), and the term "academic societies" both fills the gap in the continuum between scholarly and professional societies, and serves as a catch-all label for all these. No differentiation is made here between the labels "society," "association," and "organization," though frequently the label "society" is assigned to "scholarly" communities, perhaps less-so for professional groups.

The various professional/academic/scholarly societies may offer a variety of services and benefits to members and other stakeholders, based on what they perceive as demand from members and prospective members and their self-imposed "mission," to the degree limited by organizational resources. Those resource limitations may include finance, labor from paid staff and volunteers, and time, activity, or facility constraints imposed by sponsors, governmental bodies, or employers. Similarly, as Ginsburg (1972) noted, there may be challenges if the society's leadership does not represent as broad a spectrum of the membership as possible.

Teachers of foreign languages face some social and professional constraints that may be quite different from other professionals, and from scholars protected in those "ivory towers" of lore. Teachers of English in foreign settings where English is not a mainstream language are one example, but teachers of Korean in Vietnam, for example, face many of the same issues. These teachers may feel outcast in their own teaching setting, if the foreign language is seen as somehow a "less legitimate" subject or has been imposed by authorities without great popular support. Such "second-class citizenship" may be no less true of "local teachers" (so-called "non-native speakers of the language") as well as any foreign teachers brought in as "native-speaker teachers."

Teachers (and Their Needs) Differ

We can consider various classes of teachers (a rough typology) with

somewhat differing needs that might be addressed through teacher associations. Here we will use the case of the English teacher.

Types of English Teachers (A rough typology)
Ⅰ. Local teachers of mainstream subject − in the United States, for example, teachers of English language arts, literature, or "skills" (e.g., composition).
Ⅱ. Local teachers of English serving foreign students with limited English proficiency (e.g., ESL in the United States). These teachers may be bilingual with proficiency in the learners' home language (Type IIa) or not proficient in learner's L1 (Type IIb).
Ⅲ. Foreign "non-native speaker of English" ESL teachers in Kachru's (1985) "inner circle" who may "feel 'invisible'" (Kamhi-Stein, 2016, p. 180) despite holding higher degrees in language teaching areas. These teachers may be bilingual with proficiency in the learners' home language (Type IIIa) or not proficient in the learner's L1 (Type IIIb).
Ⅳ. Local teachers of English in a society where English is in common use (Kachru's "outer circle," e.g., Singapore). These may serve in substantially the same roles as Types I or II (or both).
Ⅴ. Foreign teachers of English in a society where English is in common use (Kachru's "outer circle"), possibly serving in roles similar to Type IV.
Ⅵ. Local teachers of English in a society where English is not widely adopted (Kachru's "expanding circle," e.g., Korea). These may be less proficient users of English or fully proficient.
Ⅶ. Foreign teachers of English in a society where English is not widely adopted (Kachru's "expanding circle," e.g., Korea).
Ⅷ. Controversially, some would add a type often labeled as "backpacker teachers," foreigners who travel the globe with minimal or no formal qualification to teach beyond a passport, color of their skin, or a perception by learners that the traveler speaks English well enough to teach. Most often these "backpacker teachers" work in settings for teacher types V and VII.

Of course, the value of such a descriptive typology is limited, as many teaching situations may be difficult to classify and distinctions may be minor. The above also does not reflect various other identities and affinities of teachers − race, nationality, gender, scholarly sub-fields of interest, etc. (Although Kachru's classic 1985 descriptors were

intended merely to contrast a so-called "native-speaker" as a linguistic-referent model, and cannot capture all the nuances of numerous distinctive social settings [Proshina, 2019], it has nevertheless been a widely adopted model (see Moussu & Llurda, 2008), which assists in discussing the types listed above.) In each of these typological classes, we find teachers seeking support and collegiality, as well as scholarly insights and the opportunity to share their own, across various sub-fields (19th century British literature, for example), and/or pedagogical know-how, or simply the chance to share a sense of home. There will also be fervent advocates for societal or pedagogical change seeking platforms to advance their cause (policy advocates), as well as those demanding improvements in labor conditions or compensation (see more in Lamb, 2012, p. 295).

What is important here is that these various "types" of teachers may have very different needs, wants, and expectations of a teachers' association.

Members/Stakeholders

In English teaching societies, one consideration must always be the stakeholders – in fact, some might even argue that stakeholders are the key orientation in professional societies (for more on stakeholders' role, see Donaldson & Preston, 1995). While some organizations may orient strongly to teachers, we should also consider non-instructional staff, administrators and researchers (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014), and para-professional teaching assistants. However, defining stakeholders may not be so easy, even when the society limits its focus to "members." Potential stakeholders may include the following:

Stakeholders in a Professional Society
• current (paid) members
• former members
• prospective members
• quasi-professionals (less than "professional" qualifications)
• licensing bodies
• employers
• educational institutions (pre-service and in-service training organizations)
• renowned scholars of the field

- sponsors/advertisers
- service recipients (students, patients)
- supporters (immediate family and caregivers, friends) as well as current, past, or interested funding agencies
- the media

Current members may be paid members, or memberships offered at no charge. We might also question whether these were "voluntary," "involuntary," or "nonvoluntary" memberships: involuntary members are those who unknowingly or unintentionally become a member, such as when membership is included in registration fees for an event (and cannot be easily excluded from that fee); whereas nonvoluntary members are forced to become members, such as to present at a conference or to gain requisite professional licensure or educational credits. Some professional bodies may offer various tiers of membership with differing levels of benefits, while, alternatively, the duration of membership (1-year, 2-year, lifetime, etc.) may not vary benefits during the term of paid membership.

Members may sense a belonging to under-represented or unidentified sectors within the profession, perhaps based on first language, race/ethnicity, workplace, or licensure. How well organizations identify and actively represent such sectors may be an important aspect in how organizations serve teachers and how teachers may serve the organization.

Prospective members, students, or retired professionals may have differing interests − does a discounted membership fee impact their rights to vote, which benefits they receive, or how they should be represented? Complimentary or unpaid memberships may similarly be considered in a manner different from current (paid) members.

It may also be important to recognize that many LTAs "often do not represent the larger mass of teachers" (Kirkham, 2015, as cited in Paran, 2016, p. 133), and this being the case, one should question how well, or even whether, the LTA should "speak for teachers." Wright (2021) points out that it is no less important to recognize what we do not know about the members, in terms of demographic information, and those who have not become members but fall within the class of persons who might become members; hence, Mahboob and England (2018) call for LTAs to look more closely at their members and the needs of various types of members.

Finally, the services and benefits offered by a professional society

may be dependent on the resources of the organization − both economic resources and personnel. Stakeholders' needs are important, but volunteers make up the bulk of the labor in most teacher associations, which means the availability of time and talent are both of great importance and a significant challenge (Elsheikh & Effiong, 2018, p. 81− 82; Nobre, 2011; Rahman & Shahabuddin, 2018, p. 181). Many volunteers may be willing to work towards one service or benefit, but not towards another (e.g., work on local "chapter" events but not on similar "national-level" activities).

LITERATURE ON TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Not a lot of research has been done on language teacher associations (LTAs). Twelve years ago, Aubrey and Coombe (2010, para. 10) noted an "alarming paucity" of study on LTAs in general, and since then, Stewart and Miyahara (2016) have observed that there is little research or clarity on LTAs, and Motteram (2016) has found that little has been done in describing membership identity in an LTA. Rather than immediately diving into the TESOL associations question, perhaps we should begin our investigation more generally, with diverse professional and scholarly societies, before returning to the limited literature on language teacher associations.

The Role of Professional/Scholarly Societies

Scholarly and professional societies have a long history: the Royal Institution of Naval Architects was formed in 1860, with objectives to promote the art and science of naval architecture (Blakeley, 2017, p. 13); while on the other side of the Atlantic, the American Society of Civil Engineers (1852), American Chemical Society (1876), American Mathematical Society (1888), and American Physical Society (1899) all claim well over 100 years of activity (National Academy of Sciences, 2005). Even 300 years of history have been claimed (Kieft et al., 2013), or in special cases such as the Académie Française, over 360 years (Wheeler, 2018, p. 5). Similarly, questions on the role of professional societies are hardly new (see Calhoun, 1963; Fink, 1979). Norton Ginsburg identified the problem of the lack of research on "mission" for

scholarly societies in the early 1970s, one which is no less valid for academic and professional societies:

> There have been few attempts to examine the fundamental postulates that provide a *raison d'etre* for such an organization, which would make it responsive to the changing environments within which it finds itself, and which provide parameters along which an appraisal of its functions, present and future, can best be undertaken. (Ginsburg, 1972, p. 1)

Some leaders and members of such groups would argue that the society should "stick to science" (LaFranzo, 2022, p. 53) while others point to an evolving role for professional groups (Wu, 2019), such as "moving the needle" in employment/tenure standards (Fennessy et al., 2018), i.e., changing the focus from output to impact (Sponberg, 2019). Professional associations' greatest challenge – and perhaps a force for change – may be simply "staying relevant in a competitive digital age, where information is at everyone's fingertips, and we can immediately communicate with almost anyone, anywhere" (Brazil, 2016, Advocacy and Influence, para. 10).

Even prior to the global Covid pandemic, professional societies' memberships were falling, and continue to fall (Mahboob & England, 2018, p. 33, discussing TESOL International; Roscoe, 2021, analyzing data from the Wiley membership survey of 2021). The future of such organizations, therefore, is dependent on correctly identifying their role. Previous discussions on the role of these societies have suggested the following:

- "guardian" of professionalism and society (Alred, 2002)
- intermediary between government and society, a delegate of governmental functions (Alred, 2002)
- improving the public perception and appreciation for the profession (Wu, 2019)
- establishing technical standards (Fink, 1979, p. 779)
- identifying special expertise and competence of particular members (Fink, 1979, p. 778)
- influencing the standard of excellence, standards of ethics, chartering/registering (licensing) (Fink, 1979, p. 779)
- quality assurance, including accreditation of training program/

facilities, credentialing of provider, standards and ethical principles, continuing education, and peer review of professional services (Chestnut et al., 1988, p. 13)
- certification and credentialing to increase, and attest to, membership knowledge and skills, to inform members of latest regulations, technologies, products, and trends (Schierhorn, 2017)
- promoting career advancement opportunities and/or supporting entrepreneurship in the field (Wu, 2019)
- "grade" of member" − e.g., advancing through to the Fellow grade, which is conferred as a mark of special competence and distinction (Fink, 1979, p. 778)
- prizes and medals for outstanding scientific or technical achievement (Fink, 1979, p. 778)
- promoting well-being, avoidance of burnout of members (Rinne et al., 2021)
- advancing advocacy efforts with government and other thought leaders (Wu, 2019)
- participating in the legislative process for the benefit of members (Association of Professional Societies in East Africa, n.d.)
- advocating for patients (Beck, 2011, p. 107)
- developing leaders where there is no clear path of formal education and career advancement (Schierhorn, 2017)
- community-building, mentoring, networking, and affirmation for under-represented groups in professions (e.g., women) through affinity groups (Hein et al, 2016)
- increasing inter-society collaboration for progress and prosperity (Wu, 2019))
- encouraging/supporting profession diversity (Morris & Washington, 2017/2018)
- providing a forum for mediation and conciliation for members (Association of Professional Societies in East Africa, n.d.).

While quite an extensive listing, it is interesting that not included in the above, and seldom mentioned in the scholarly discussions of scholarly societies, are the perhaps too-obvious roles of producing conferences (conventions, meetings), and producing or sponsoring scholarly journals (and/or magazines, newsletters, etc., whether print or online).

The idea of "post-nominal letters" (Welding Institute, n.d.), such as

is common in certain fields of science and engineering, seems of little relevance to language teachers (but note the attempt by The British Institute of English Language Teaching, circa 1999−2000).

Language Teacher Associations

The past ten years have seen increasing numbers of studies on various aspects of LTA leadership or functions (e.g., Smith & Kuchah, 2013; Thorkelson, 2016; Dickey, 2019), and several excellent collections, such as Elsheikh et al. (2018) and *ELT Journal*'s Volume 70(2), Special issue: Focus on teacher associations (2016). These studies point to the needs for further, and more exhaustive, studies on organizations that are as yet still not well understood.

Paran (2016) approves of Lamb's (2012) description of LTAs:

> networks of professionals, run by and for professionals, focused mainly on support for members, with knowledge exchange and development as well as representation of members' views as their defining functions. (p. 128)

We may discover some of the approaches that an English teachers' association may take from the nature of the publications they produce: obviously, "publication" would be one of the services offered to stakeholders in the profession. In addition to the refereed classroom-teacher oriented *TESOL Journal* and the scholarly *TESOL Quarterly*, both of which are produced professionally by Wiley but managed in some part by TESOL International Association, various newsletters, blogs, and a "bulletin" are produced within TESOL International by volunteers supported by paid staff. In addition to these serial publications, topical books are produced in fields of pedagogy (e.g., DelliCarpini & Alonso, 2013; Healey et al., 2019; Vorholt, 2018), professional standards (TESOL, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2018), and advocacy (Linville & Whiting, 2022). IATEFL has provided support materials for language teacher associations, offering guidelines and tips through publications developed by IATEFL members and published through the British Council, including areas of events and conferences (Gómez, 2011) and quite a large list of other possibilities suggested in Falcao and Szesztay (2006, pp. 31−35):

- Meetings to share individual experiences as well as to discuss specific problems people may have encountered as language teachers
- Meetings to make the most of potentially useful visitors (e.g., specialists visiting a local institution or coming to the area to take part in a major conference)
- Meetings to exchange materials among members (e.g., books, videos, cassettes)
- Meetings to discuss the current literature in the field
- Meetings to discuss individual or group research projects that are being developed or are already being conducted by members
- Series of workshops on a given topic
- Announcements/calendar of upcoming regional events of interest to teachers
- Workshops or roundtable discussions to prepare and/or evaluate teaching materials, workplans, syllabuses, tests and examinations, curricula, educational policies, and so on, perhaps with a view to preparing a position statement
- Presentations and/or discussions of published materials by materials writers, publishers, book distributors, etc.
- Group viewings and/or discussions of audio/video programs (live television, live or recorded online/satellite transmissions of seminars, discussions, presentations)
- Weekend or holiday get-togethers to practice using the target language, through language immersion (with or without the involvement of native speakers, or special guest visitors)
- Promoting cultural events such as theatre, films, videos, etc., in the local community
- Mentoring and peer-coaching partner matching systems
- Team research
- Study tours, or more informal group visits, to a country where the target language is a native one
- Exchange programs with colleagues in such countries
- Information exchange arrangements with other associations
- Purely social events such as dances, barbecues, parties, dinners, to promote good social relationships, within and around the membership
- Mounting local, state, national, and/or international conferences, seminars, etc.

- Disseminating information about events and activities through reports, newsletters, audiocassettes, videos, internet webpages, etc.
- Promoting research through the public presentation of individual or joint projects
- Affiliating officially with regional, national, and international associations
- Initiating contact and the exchange of information with informal associations
- Providing the incentive for the creation of informal associations
- Creating theatre groups to present plays in the target language
- Creating and maintaining a teacher resource center
- Promoting and administering exchange programs for teachers with institutions in countries where the target language is spoken
- Promoting and administering scholarship schemes, perhaps mediating between individual members and foreign agencies to provide scholarships
- Learner-focused activities and events, advising and consultation, and formal representation on policymaking bodies

Thorkelson (2016, p. 72) summarizes Oliphant's (2001) benefits of joining a teacher's group as follows:

- Greater awareness of the profession and associated problems
- Motivation to renew their focus on learning and teaching
- Better teaching through exchanges of ideas and greater involvement
- Benefits for students from more professionally knowledgeable and motivated teachers
- Joy of sharing ideas and experiences with other teachers
- Connection to others, which helps them overcome loneliness and isolation
- New ways of thinking
- Empowerment as part of confidence and growing expertise

Motteram's (2016) findings of member-reported benefits from their IATEFL membership, as indicated in a 2011 survey, included the following:

- Attending the annual conference

- Knowledge development
- Community (building community)
- Networking
- Continuing professional development
- Personal development
- Demonstrating professionalism

In contrast to benefits, Thorkelson's (2016, pp. 84–85) survey of KOTESOL members pointed to some member priorities:

- KOTESOL remain active in professional development for teachers (94.6%)
- provide a quality international conference (91.28%)
- be open to everyone (90.63%)
- be respected as an academic organization (88.79%)
- be transparent in what it does and how it does it (86.6%)
- foster cross-cultural understanding (80.16%)
- maintain close relationships with international organizations like TESOL (78.16%) and domestic organizations as well (73.87)
- KOTESOL to be a respected academic organization (88.79%), only 60% responded that offering research opportunities and grants were something the organization should be doing.

While these studies overlap in many areas, they also offer some different directions to consider. Some items might be added to a professional CV, others are more personal or less specific (networking, connections), and some are rather vague or aspirational.

The role of advocacy may be challenging for some LTAs. As Motteram (2016, p. 151) points out, many LTAs face legal restrictions in advocacy due to their status as a registered charity. Nunan (2001), however, argued that advocacy is a critical criterion for professionalism.

METHOD

As a preliminary study, breadth was preferred to depth, and fewer research assets were invested in collecting original data. Two methodological techniques were piloted. The literature survey above is an important foundational component of this research, complemented by

a quick (73-hour) Facebook "poll" (survey) in the KOTESOL Facebook group (approximately 3,800 group members as of April 12, 2022) and an email survey to more than 200 language teacher associations across the globe (conducted March–April, 2022).

The Facebook poll initially presented eight choices for selection of "the three most important services a teacher association should provide members/society." Facebook users could add additional options; one option was added by a user ("vetted work opportunities"). Most of those enrolled in the KOTESOL Facebook group are, or were previously, teaching English in Korea, though some teach in other lands. All would be construed to be language teachers with affinity to KOTESOL, hence, stakeholders of one type or another, though many of these group enrollees have never been dues-paying members of KOTESOL.

The list of language teacher associations across the globe used to send the email survey has been compiled over nearly four years from various lists, include TESOL International Association affiliates, IATEFL associates, and groups found through internet searches or offered by other researchers (see Dickey 2019, p. 7). The aim for this contact list, in general, was to include one large TESOL-type teacher association for each major geopolitical sector: states and provinces in the US, Canada, Australia, and Germany, and national organizations in most other countries, although there are cases where two or even three organizations are included for a given geographic unit. More than 110 of these organizations have responded to one or more requests for information in the past three years. Responses to this study's question were coded into thematic units and quantified across the data set of responses, i.e., thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). The researcher used the topical areas described by Falcao and Szesztay (2006) to initialize potential theme areas, but considering the small data set, these were consolidated. (As Braun & Clarke [2006, p. 80] observe, the language "themes emerged from the data" suggest removal of any suggestion of coder bias, which of course cannot be ruled out when the researchers themselves determine which themes have "emerged.") Possibilities added to that list were publications of various types, and advocacy on general policies and advocacy for teacher rights and for learners. Other themes were added as they did in fact "emerge" from the text, confirming other literature, i.e., "setting standards."

ANALYSIS

The Quick Facebook Poll was available for only 73 hours in the KOTESOL Facebook Group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/kotesol). Although the group has roughly 3,800 participants, the poll was shared with only 766 (poll reach) during that time, thus 56 responses represents a 7.3% response rate, which must be considered as "poor" in a closed group where many of the members are familiar with others.

TABLE 1. Quick Facebook Poll (Survey)

Question: What are the 3 most important services a teacher association should provide members/society? Tick no more than three, please. (This is part of a research project, I appreciate your inputs [*sic*]).

Response Items	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Workshops (local)	44	31.4
Conferences/seminars/symposia	32	22.9
Ideas sharing / mentoring	30	21.4
Professional/scholarly publications	13	9.3
Socialization	8	5.7
Advocacy for relevant public policy	6	4.3
Labor representation (union)	4	2.9
Discounts in services beyond the society itself (bookstores, etc.)	2	1.4
Vetted work opportunities	1	0.7
Total Responses	140	100

Note. Respondents = 56.

The preferences and relative ranking for one service over another may be peculiar to the respondents, who are mostly members and participants of Korea TESOL (KOTESOL) and JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching). These organizations are particularly active at the local chapter level, with many monthly meetings (outside of the Covid era, but even, to a lesser extent during the pandemic, in online sessions). A total of 140 responses from 56 respondents indicates that

some respondents chose fewer than three options. One respondent asked for a clarification on "socialization," which was clarified as something between teachers. (Slightly after this data collection, another respondent commented on the possible confusion between "networking" and how society impacts individuals, in terms of the item "socialization.") "Ideas sharing / mentoring" may have been an erroneous conflation of distinct concepts. As noted above, one respondent chose to add one option.

Email responses ("data items," per Braun & Clarke, 2006) were received from nine teacher organizations by April 13, 2022. These were the following:

- BELTA (Bangladesh)
- English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia (ELTAM)
- TEFLIN (Indonesia)
- English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN)
- Society of Niger English Language Teachers (SNELT)
- Peru TESOL Association
- TESL Canada
- ELT Ireland
- TESOLANZ (New Zealand)

Unfortunately, no responses were received from any of the US states, except one that requested I pull such information from the organization's website.

First-level thematic coding based on close use of the original text produced 26 or 27 themes or topic areas relating to "How your teachers' organization supports teachers" and eight or nine for "how teachers support organizations that support teachers" (one response was unclear in whether it was supporting teachers or supporting organizations: "buying membership cards"). These were then consolidated for Table 2, but the original themes and counts are included.

TABLE 2. Themes from Teacher Association Email Survey

Question: If you were asked to state in one paragraph "How your teachers' organization supports teachers, and how teachers support organizations that support teachers," what would be the best response for your teachers' organization?

LTA Supports Teachers

Thematic Instances (Total organizations reporting each in parentheses)	Total LTAs Reporting
Conferences (3), Seminars (4), Workshops & training (4) Regular ELT events (2)	7
Advocacy	4
Publication (1), Journal (1), Newsletter (1), Publishing books & chapters (1)	3
Scholarships (2), Grants to attend our conference (1), Project grants (1)	3
Teacher certification (1), In-service training (1)	2
Networking (2), Exchanging ideas & sharing experiences (1)	2
Relay news / dissemination (2)	2
Library / resource center (2)	2
Cooperation amongst TESL organizations, government, others (2)	2
Standards setting (1)	1
Visibility of cause/students/teachers/organization (1)	1
Research projects (1)	1
Curriculum / materials development (1)	1
Nurtures teachers (1)	1
Research informed professional learning & development (1)	1
Supplemental health insurance for members (1)	1
Total Instances	**34**

Teachers Support LTA

Thematic Instances (Total organizations reporting each)	Total LTAs Reporting
Participation / attendance	5
Organize / deliver events (2)	2
Volunteer (2)	2
Dues (1)	1
Other payment (1)	1
Support from their institution (1)	1
Promote the TA	1
Membership makes association a stakeholder for other agencies to deal with (1)	1
Nothing (1)	1
Total Instances	**15**

Note. Non-duplicate instances, where the same theme appeared more than once in a response, only the first instance is reported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The wide variety of possible services discussed in the literature appears to be substantiated in the email survey and partially supported by the Facebook poll. As Roscoe (2020) pointed out for scholarly societies, "there is no unifying set of benefits or services that will be appreciated by all members" (p. 29). This appears to suggest that a future teachers survey should provide more diverse options for selection – perhaps in a ranking or weighted response system – yet the challenges of potentially tainting responses by suggestion makes this a significant intellectual exercise. Similarly for a teacher association survey (as with any survey), nuance in questions is critical. As one example, how far do we segmentalize themes such as *conferences*, *seminars*, *workshops*, *training*, *in-service programs*, *local meetings*, and *events*, where workshops or "talks" or trainings may be a part of a larger program? Similarly, the challenge of publications, where journals, newsletters, blogs, periodic emails, books, book chapters, and other informative materials are disseminated in scholarly, academic, or "teacherly" (less academic) genres. In a report to the KOTESOL National Council in December 2021, National Membership Committee Chair Lindsay Herron pointed to some of the membership benefits of greater and lesser interest to current members. A more comprehensive yet specific survey, such as that done by Skarlicki et al. (2000) with the Canadian Psychology Association, may be a point of reference for an improved survey of teachers (in this study, data from a survey sent to current, former, and nonmember professionals enabled researchers to correctly identify respondents as current versus former members, and current versus never-been members).

The results of this preliminary survey are relatively unsurprising, but fruitful, nonetheless. There appears to be some mismatch between demand and offerings at both the KOTESOL and international levels. Yes, conferences, seminars, and symposia, as well as workshops, are in demand from teachers and popular services from LTAs: for teachers, 22.9% and 31.4%, respectively, while for LTAs, seven out of nine reported offering these (77.7%). Mentoring and idea-sharing was requested by 22.9% of teachers, and two of nine LTAs mentioned this (22.2%). Only 9.3% of teacher respondents selected professional publications in their top three services, while three of nine organizations mentioned publications (33.3%). On the other hand, four of nine LTAs

(44.4%) reported activity in advocacy, while only 4.3% of teachers sought this. There also appears to be a need for LTAs to publicize their needs for volunteer assistance more effectively − busy teachers may need some type of tangible professional or social reward to become involved.

A deeper dive into teacher demographics might present trends and explain variances between teachers and LTAs. One possibility is that LTA leaders are less representative of their memberships due to expectations that more senior and more highly educated teachers take leadership roles (Dickey, 2018, p. 280). This might account for some mismatches between members and organizations, if leaders do not "see" the needs, wants, and wishes of the broader teaching community. Scholarly journals may be seen by senior leaders as essential to the organization but considered less useful by classroom teachers. Purposeful turnover of leadership, and the specific aim to incorporate various demographics in the leadership of the organization, may be one path towards more substantive representation (Dickey, 2018) and a better fit between organization and members.

Academic associations appear to be struggling with the costs, lost income, and staffing challenges in publishing, online conferencing, and the widespread availability of free or inexpensive professional development options through other (online) resources, thereby devaluing the traditional benefits of paid memberships. While we cannot project with any certainty the future public health constraints on face-to-face gatherings of teaching professionals, further studies may help point towards increased online or hybrid conferences. Various other services may become increasingly important, and it is critical that language teaching associations become more aware of stakeholder expectations. Stakeholders' input is an additional area where organizations should invest some research assets.

In a nutshell, LTAs need to do a better job of acquiring information from members and stakeholders (including non-members and former members), analyzing it effectively, and then modifying services to address shortfalls. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, https://gdpr-info.eu/) and similar regulations in many jurisdictions make this type of study increasingly difficult.

Website study of language teacher associations is also a possible future research area. On the other hand, the statements posted in organizational websites may be aspirational themes rather than statements of actual performance, thus a survey questionnaire of leaders, such as

that initiated in the present study, may be more appropriate. It must be recognized that open-ended requests for information, such as conducted in this study, can seem daunting, and get pushed to the bottom of overly busy leaders' work piles. One possibility may be through the "affiliates meeting" at a TESOL or IATEFL convention. It can also challenge the researcher when numerous responses are received, pushing the boundaries between narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993), content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), or qualitative content analysis (Morgan, 1993), where meaning is drawn from the individual text, and thematic analysis, where meaning is drawn across texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Limitations

The findings of this study should be recognized as only suggestive. This was a preliminary investigation to explore parameters for further research, with small response rates in time-limited surveys. The envisioned deeper study should reconsider the options for "important" (or "desired"?) language teacher association services; for example, "continuing professional development" is probably an overly broad generalization that includes a number of other selections and fails to specify some distinguishable sub-elements, such as professional certificates (or "badges"?), and should extend the reach of the survey as well as offer some demographic detail of the respondents: We might expect that PhD holders have different expectations compared to relatively untrained novice teachers, and long-term members may see things differently from non-members or new members.

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