



**When voices work together, Needs are solved and Opportunities become dreams.  
Franklin Tellez**

During my participation at the TESOL Summit activities, I realized that many TESOL professionals implement changes in their teaching practices, bring great ideas into their different classrooms, or create materials for their learners according to the needs of their unique teaching contexts. Unfortunately, there are places, for example in Latin America, where TESOL professionals don't have the support of their institutions, policy makers and their Ministries of Education to be these agents of change. In some countries access to new information, technology, teacher training workshops, trainings, and scholarships are planned and implemented only in the main cities whereas the rural areas and small towns are not part of the plans of the private or public institutions. English language teachers then work in isolation and without access to resources that would contribute to their professional development and change. In 2015 our Association received a grant to implement an on line course ELTeach Certification (NATGEO Learning) 3 month on line program. Some private institutions advised me not to include public schools teachers because they did not have the resources or technology to pass this program. We decided to give the opportunity to 60% of the public school teachers. They did their best and the results were not the best ones but they passed the assessment part. They had the opportunity and did their best: they rented-borrowed laptops, and spent hours in cyber café doing their tasks. As president of the Association I knew about the potential and big effort our members were able to reach.

However, many English language teachers would like to grow in their professional knowledge and skills. They are willing to learn and improve their language skills to be better teachers for the benefit of their students. They want to empower learners to love and embrace their L1, home culture and traditions as well as use the English language successfully. It is important to train these teachers to become leaders (agents of change) in their classrooms. In other words, there is a need for policies that allow educators to have equal access to trainings and resources to grow as professionals in order to bring effective and innovative lessons into the classrooms.

Changes are made when collaboration happens. When I was elected president, my first step was to involve more private and public institutions to be part of the members of the board because in previous boards only one institution had more than 70% of

representatives. Now there are more voices representing public and private institutions. My second step was to involve editorials, big bookstores, and some private institutions to sponsor some teachers trainings around the country and the national conference. We met with these institutions and today teachers in rural and urban areas receive the same trainings and the same materials. It is important to network and involve small groups and organizations that are trying to reach the same goals, Collaborating, collecting, sharing information, data, research can help to present a unique plan, a video, a report or proposal which is then shared with institutions involved in education.

As Educators we are implementing amazing activities in the classrooms but we are not spreading the word that we are making a difference in teaching and learning, we know and learners know that we are doing a great job, but administrators, researchers, stakeholders don't know what we are doing. Invite some of the people involved in Education to be part of the improvement of your students; they have to be part of the goals that learners are achieving or the challenges they have to improve. Make videos of your activities, share surveys, share your research, send your reports of improvements or failures to the different people involved in making decisions to change or improve an old or a new policy.

Public and private institutions involved in Education believe that our role is only teaching English, As TESOL professionals we have let them understand throughout our leadership, and professionalism that we go beyond the traditional "repeat after me teaching", we agents of change in the classrooms, in the communities and in our countries.

TESOL professional are always doing their best to bring innovative lessons to our classrooms, we want to make big positive changes as professionals for the benefit of our learners. But we don't want to continue applying policies if they are out of the realities of our needs and our learners. We need to have access to the information, access to trainings, access to the technology and researches that we can use for our professional development.

Education is a team, Educators are not a team of people waiting for instructions, we want to be part of the team of policy makers, stakeholders, researchers, software developers, book writers and ministries of Education who writes the rules of the game.

In this changing world, we don't need only to complete a program, we don't need only to implement a policy, that is not the teacher role. TESOL Educators need to be ready to teach learners to face a world outside the classrooms, teach to be tolerant, teach to use the technology in a meaningful way, teach critical thinking, teach to embrace culture and traditions, teach to respect the environment, teach to help others. We can do this only with the support of all the institutions and people involve in education.

During my presentation in Greece, I presented a little bit of the video Wilber's Journey (youtube), this is a boy that had the opportunity to learn English in the Access program. This is program sponsored by the U.S. government in some countries around the world. Wilber fought against many difficulties, no electricity, no cleaning water system, and walking many hours to attend his English Class. After he finished his English program he

came to the capital to continue his studies, and today Wilber got a scholarship in a private university and his dream is to finish his career and support his family. He had the opportunity, he had the access to study a new language and he reached his goals. There are many Wilbers around the world waiting for an opportunity to change their lives.