

Lecture Four: Development for Different Objectives

1. Introduction

Teaching is said to be in a state of flux. It never ceases to change. It is full of variables and complexities. A teacher who does not look at his previous teaching, who is reticent and sceptical, may fall in the trap of jadedness. So as to reach the feeling of satisfaction and enthusiasm, any teacher can build a new vision which allows him to broaden his knowledge and skills about teaching. Teacher education development; therefore, offers an arena of new ideas and possibilities to ascertain effective teaching in a variety of scopes.

2. The Developing Teacher

Admittedly, many teachers, regardless of their life-time experience, strive to develop and bring s Cobuild Dictionary suggests three definitions. These, respectively, are:

1. The gradual growth of something.
2. The process that results from gradually transforming a basic design from simple to more advance.
3. Any event that has occurred recently and is likely to influence a present situation.

Having highlighted the dictionary entries of the term “development”, the next step is to address these definitions in relation to English language teaching. In simpler terms, how the term is used in an ELT context.

2.1. Development as the process of growth

Under this definition, development is regarded as a process that is likely to occur throughout time. In the field of education, teachers develop and grow as a result of the experience they gain year after year. In this very specific context, Perkins(1998:20) posits that “if we are doing something we enjoy, then continuous Professional Development is a natural component of our daily work

life. It is an attitude.”

Stated differently, development, in this sense, is inevitably a gradual process that may be influenced by the teacher’s own conscious efforts, those of the institution, or it might simply occur due to the very natural result of performing the job, i.e. teaching.

The teacher can be the direct source of things and can also react to those things that emerge while doing his job. Events and circumstances such as the introduction of a new government policy or working within new colleagues might well change and/or shape the way s/he changes as a teacher. Similarly, the decisions the teacher takes about improving his/her teaching, the courses s/he attends and the pedagogical materials s/he reads are factors of equal weight in shaping new ways of teaching.

2.2. Development as making the basic advanced

The nitty gritty of development within this view is “to make things better”. It refers to the individual efforts by the teacher to improve him/herself or by the institution to promote teacher improvement. All too often, training organisations offer development courses and schools and universities discuss and sometimes advertise their teacher development programmes. In this vein, Edge (2002: 15) writes that “training is what other people do to you. Development is what you do to yourself.”

Yet, in ELT the distinction above is not always clear. The training courses the institution provides to improve teaching usually take the form of what is generally referred to as “supervised self-development». Edge (1992) has, himself, invoked “cooperative development” to refer to the collaboration among teachers themselves to attain development. He rightly posits that “I need someone to work with, but I don’t need someone who wants to change me and

make me more like the way they think I ought to be. I need someone who will help me see myself clearly.” (Edge,1992:38)

2.3. Development as a result of recent events:

Under this last definition, development is intimately associated with the impact of some recent events and incidents conducive to a change in modelling ways of teaching. These events and incidents do not happen deliberately; they are not chosen. They generally come from external sources; for instance, complaints coming from the institution about the students’ little progress, or the introduction of a new technology in the classroom (interactive whiteboards).

To sum then ,we have shed light on three possible definitions of the term development and applied them in relation to ELT. We have come up with the conclusion that the teacher can change or develop in the following ways:

- Unconscious change (to change without noticing change)
- Deliberate change (to make things change)
- Change as a result of recent happenings.
- Teacher development: a Necessity in Education

By and large, professional development in any domain is crucial as it helps learn and apply newly acquired knowledge and skills which, in turn, will improve one’s performance at work. What is more, development is seen as an on-going learning that is not only approved by the profession, but rather a requirement for keeping the job.

In the field of education, research has evidenced that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in enhancing student achievement. For teachers to be as effective as possible they have to “continually” expand their knowledge and skills in order to put into practice

the best pedagogical strategies. Also, teachers learn how to help students learn at the highest levels and how to better cope with their needs and weaknesses.

Regretfully, many teachers may not be well aware of most efficient methods for improving their own teaching on the one side and their students learning strategies on the other side. Besides, many misunderstandings do exist among teachers about the notion of development; its purpose and function. Teacher development seems to be one of the most needed strategy educational institutions have to strengthen and support at a time when quality education accounts too much. In a nutshell then, teacher professional development is undisputedly the gateway to attain better teaching and learning as well.