

Teacher Education Development as a Means for Effective Teaching in the Algerian Tertiary Education

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Abstract: Without training no teacher can be effective though accumulating many years of experience. In the past two decades, it has come to knowledge that reflection when backed up by teacher education development can greatly help a teacher achieve positive learning outcomes. The present statement, heretofore, was meaninglessly viewed, but nowadays, it has turned to be unquestionable and indisputable especially when the scope is narrowed down to peer review. One of the thorniest issues which has been, inexplicably, put in a conspiracy of silence by officials is, in the Algerian context, the quasi absence of a pedagogical preparation intended to would-be teachers that might help them evolve in a well rounded academic and pedagogical tendency. This endemic situation has led to a black out giving rise to a poor teaching quality.

Key words: Teacher education; development; effective teaching; professional teacher

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1-Introduction :

The overall academic and pedagogic situation in Algeria which has, for so long, been imbued by enduring awkward practices has been stigmatised in the by-gone years by a mediocre quality teaching. What strikes dreadfully, is the fact that neither state or departmental officials, nor academics have tried to restrain this situation which has taken, for years on end, a form of a silent conspiracy, worsened by the spur-of-the-moment decisions of government officials towards rehabilitation that also led unavoidably to a downright dismay. University teachers at a large scale tackle the job of teaching, most definitely, being underprepared or even not prepared pedagogically. Therefore, as prospective teachers, when newly recruited, they unwillingly develop awkward teaching practices which, in the flow of time, make their teaching ineffective and degrading. Another more or less thorny issue, is that these teachers will never benefit from any accredited professional development which, by way of hope, would put on the right track to attain the apogee of teaching. The admitted result, is that the Algerian university remains ranked among the last globally. More importantly, this concept is, by way of common sense, indubitably essential for any university teacher to undertake it as the corner stone of an on-going professional academic and most definitely pedagogical self-development. This concept, still unknown, to the quasi totality of the Algerian teachers, is called: Teacher Education Development. It should be self initiated by every single teacher, but, in no way can it be implemented. Expert academics should disclose its byways and show its importance in the outset to would-be teachers as well as to working newbie, tenured and experienced teachers. It is

invariably official that Algerian university teachers have never been subjected to any training and that has dramatically given birth to a chaotic teaching situation, which, in turn, has caused a, widely known, undeniable bad quality teaching. Experts in reflective teaching and teacher education development, insist that if these concepts are articulated at a sporadic frequency, can by all means lead teachers to reach positive learning outcomes with their every teaching class and undoubtedly to a sound quality teaching.

2- The Effective Language Teacher

To be a language teacher requires more than linguistic and pedagogic competence. It also aims at having necessary ability to involve learners in the learning process, so as to help them acquire a systematic use of the language in meaningful ways, both its spoken and written forms, as well as, its target culture (Benmoussat: 2003). In fact there are two broad views on what determines the effectiveness of a language teacher. One focuses on teacher's language and methodological knowledge skills (Rivers: 1972). The other concentrates on personality, for example teacher's intelligence, self-awareness and rapport (Bridges: 1993).

2-1- Personality

Admittedly, the effective teacher is the one who, in terms of personality, has the attitude towards change, development, diversity and quality. All too often, these qualities can be of great prominence, in the making of learner's attitude and a vivid impulse towards interest and motivation. Within the same context, this teacher is in full possession of self-awareness, interpersonal skills and

sensitivity to context. Moreover, s/he has the ability to observe, think critically and use experience. What else is that, personality can stand as the criterion that enhances flexibility in re- enacting and in shaping teaching practices.

2 -2-Methodology

Methodology contributively shapes the language teacher. For a novice teacher, it is quite imperative to acquire the knowledge and experience of how to teach a language. The emphasis of such an acquisition is laid on psycho-pedagogic knowledge of how to impart the language. At times, linguists and psycholinguists have gone to great length to provide teachers with a large number of views and teaching approaches. The diversity of these views and approaches made teachers plan and adapt their programmes with regard of their learners' needs. Henceforth, it is in the classroom situation that they decide about the most effective and efficient approach, method or technique (Semmoud, 2008). In terms of knowledge of methodology, the teacher should have his own views on methodology on learning and teaching using available materials; whereas, in skills he should respect implications of theory in planning and teaching. In a concise sense, teachers need a sound training in the domain of methodology so as to achieve a better implementation of the syllabus they work with and be in an appropriate position to take initiatives to enrich, innovate and design materials for their learners' specific needs and aspirations. Wilkins asserts all this in what follows:

“Teachers cannot be expected to put new methods into practice efficiently, unless they are thoroughly familiar with both the principles and details of the methods” (1974:32)

The core-component of most well-known methodologies consists of activities where learners are required to speak or write the second language. However,

inappropriate methodology will make learning too- consuming and may discourage learners.

2-3. Language

Language is another important criterion that shapes out the effective teacher. Yet, the language teacher needs to know something about language; he must have an appropriate language use as well as an awareness of his views on language. In terms of skills, the language teacher must be able to see the implications of language analysis and to draw conclusions from one's contact with language. Moreover, he must have sensitivity to learners' language level.

The TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Language) Organization, in its Guidelines for the Certification and Preparation of Teachers of English of Other Languages in the USA (1975); cited the necessity for the teacher:

“to understand the nature of language, the fact of language varieties- social, regional, functional, the structure and development of the English language systems...”

Arguably, however, it can be stated that an uninterested or offensive teacher will offer very little support and few opportunities for learning, and may demotivate learners. In terms of methodology, on the other side, it is worth noting that inappropriate methodology will make learning too time- consuming and may discourage learners, and limited or faulty language will communicate an inaccurate picture of the target language. Teaching, as it is conceived, is a work that entails both thinking and feeling, and those who can reflectively think and feel will find their work more rewarding and their efforts more successful. In other words, teachers with quality of personality, methodology and

language, may become more skilled if they reflect through their teaching practices. This reflection can be enhanced by a professional development, which motivate thoroughly teachers to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. These needs may be various but among the most important ones are, firstly to aim to proficiency in the target language with an understanding of the associated culture, and secondly to level-up learner's language awareness. To come up with this, teachers should go along with a continuous development in the wide context of educational change.

3- Effective Language Teaching

The notion of effective language teaching focuses on the development of teachers of English and how intervention programmes such as pre-service and in-service training can make the process of effective teaching more successful. According to Husen and Postlethwaite (2004:5930) teacher professional development is marked by four types of growth: growth in knowledge, growth in skills, growth in judgement, and growth in the contributions teachers make to a professional community. A holistic approach, on another side, includes concepts such as teacher knowledge, the skills and knowledge which a teacher needs to have in order to teach his learning area effectively. Likewise, Brown believes that:

“the challenge in second /foreign language education is to promote inspired teaching through professionalism”. (1993:2)

This holds the idea that effective teaching does not originate from a set of acquired language principles or from approach to language instruction, but it is an on-going process in which teachers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. One crucial step in attaining ‘the highest standards of teaching’ is the placement of a high value

on the teaching role, including in the tenure and promotion process, or in rewarding teaching through salary increment and prizes.

Acquiring effectiveness in teaching requires an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection, and growth that yields the best results when sustained by practice and when focused on job- embedded responsibilities (Semmoud, 2008). Contrariwise, teachers may become passive technicians when they practise their methodology of teaching into a single approach and do not make an in-depth use of their professional knowledge which can emphatically foster effectiveness and alacrity.

4- Teacher's Professional Knowledge

Many a pedagogue has considered teacher's knowledge of basic skills, and general pedagogical skills as of the most prominent prerequisites of professional knowledge teaching. Others, however, just view teachers as obedient civil servants, i.e. they work in their classes as blind-syllabus followers who consume programmes that are provided to them with a limited imagination and a quasi absence of critical thinking. Shulman suggests that 'while characterizations of effective teachers exist, most of these dwell on the teacher's management of the classroom' rather than 'the management of ideas within classroom discourse' (1987:1). On another side Myers describes professional knowledge as follows:

- The professional knowledge, skills and values of teachers are considered by teachers themselves rather than absorbed from elsewhere.

- Teachers construct and develop their knowledge, skills, and values in the context of how they use that new knowledge and those new skills and values.
- The value of any set of professional knowledge, skills, and value perspectives is determined by its utility in helping individual teachers teach rather by its esoteric origin.
- The places that teachers turn to as sources of knowledge, skills and values are not all external to themselves and their classrooms. Teachers also generate their own educational theories from their personal teaching, reflection on that teaching, and self-analysis. (1997:5). Met quoted in Simpson Norris (1999) suggests that ‘there is a configuration of skills and knowledge that all teachers of foreign languages should acquire’. She goes on to say that this knowledge includes,

a well-rounded background in the liberal arts and sciences; personal characteristics such as commitment to learning, leadership and communication skills; professional knowledge such as theories of learning, human development, educational psychology, and so on. (Met 1989:177)

Herein Met argues that teacher knowledge is directly involved in foreign language education and that teachers all along their career should be inquisitive and acquire a diversity of knowledge that would permeate them to tackle their job efficiently and effectively. Besides, knowledge of the content is

important because it deals with the teaching process including the most useful forms of representing and communicating content and how learners best acquire the specific concepts and topics of a subject. It is therefore imperative for beginning teachers to work with issues of pedagogical content (knowledge) as well as general pedagogy(or generic teaching principles.)

5- The Professional Teacher

The teacher is regarded as professional when he/she maintains and develops the empowerment of his teaching practices, on which he/she must be responsible and authoritative, rather than subordinate to an outside authority or expertise. The professional teacher, within another view, is distinguished by his particular skills, knowledge, language and ethical principles. In this respect, Ur *assures* that *the* professional teacher is the one who has the virtue of superior knowledge, consistent self-development and a serious commitment to the achievement of teaching objectives.(1997:5). Furthermore, (Ur 1997) sets a clarification of the concept of the professional teacher by contrasting it with the technician and the academic teacher .Contrasting it with the former, the professional teacher possesses an underlying understanding of the principles of his/her practice, not just a collection of technical skills. This enables these teachers to make appropriate real-time decisions in practice when different principles appear to conflict. More importantly, it equips them with the ability and authority to criticize input from other professionals or academics and evaluate its appropriateness and acceptability in principle or for specific contexts. Contrasted with the latter, the professional teacher is primarily engaged in real-time action and is motivated by the desire to bring about real world change seen as valuable or desirable.

6- Development for Prospective and Experienced Teachers

Teacher development can be a career-long process which may be undertaken by experienced teachers as well as prospective ones. If separated from training, development means something distinct and unusual, and that people who have little or no experience of teaching are not ready with the issues it raises. Yet, this is a misrepresentation of the nature of teacher development, which is a reflective way of approaching whatever it is that teachers are doing at whatever level of experience they are doing it. The focus of teacher education is extended from a narrowly based training model towards a broader approach in which developmental insights are learned alongside classroom teaching skills. Henceforth, it is the role of teacher educators to design and implement teacher education programmes both at pre-service and in-service levels. Pennington argues:

“viewing teaching as a profession provides a motivation for continuous career growth, and that teacher educators have a responsibility to prepare teachers right from the start to adopt a development perspective.” (Pennington 1990: 134)

This is to say that this developmental perspective aims at setting programmes which will have, as goals, the development of a set of classroom skills and knowledge. More importantly, to impel teachers to develop their own pedagogical belief system for both novice teachers at the level of university and, of course, for tenured and experienced teachers, who have worked for a given period of time as fulltime teachers at the level of a secondary school. Thus, teacher preparation moves beyond training in the narrow sense to enabling a teacher to reflect upon any situation rather than training for a specification.

7- Assumptions about Teacher Development

Teaching entails more than pedagogical dimensions, it is said to be a complex task because it happens in many different ways. A teacher, who has a wide range of knowledge with a deep awareness about teaching components, is capable of making appropriate judgements and changes his views according to the requirements of classroom practices. Richards & Lockhart (1994) pointed out to five assumptions about teacher development.

- An informed teacher has an extensive knowledge base about teaching
- Much can be learned about teaching through self-inquiry
- Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher
- Experience is insufficient as a basis for development
- Critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching

(Richard and Lockhart 1994:3)

An experienced teacher can never take on new teachings unless he gets rid of the rut he may be caught in. The rut is a set of routines and strategies with which the teacher handles the recurring dimensions of teaching. Though experience is considered as an important key of professional growth, it must have another facet of critical reflection which can trigger an understanding of teaching which brings about betterment and improvement of the teacher's practices with his learners (Semmoud, 2016). In the same line of thought, Underhill argues:

Development means...keeping myself on the same side of the learning fence as my students. This is the only way that I can keep alive a sense of challenge and adventure in my career, and avoid getting in a rut. If I am in a rut, then so is

my teaching, and then so are my students, and learning from a rut is tedious, slow and uninspiring. (Underhill 1988:4)

Self inquiry, equally, can be a resourceful capacity to manage change and from which much can be learnt. For many teachers, classroom visits by supervisors are the main source of feedback and self inquiry on their teaching because the comments made by the supervisor could give rise to a new source of information and therefore a new starting that is generated by an external source of knowledge. Teacher development, likewise, enhances teachers to collect information about their teaching either individually or collaboratively through a colleague, making decisions about their teaching, and deciding if initiatives need to be taken, and selecting strategies to carry them out.

8-Conclusion

Language has been viewed and valued as a principal tool for learning teaching especially when the teacher is a non-native speaker of the language s/he teaches. The role of the teacher is, therefore considered as a facilitator in the whole process of the academic teaching programmes. Thereby this denotes that the accomplishment of his teaching areas in a competent way is a high standard educational objective that is carried out in special trainings. More importantly, when language teachers are also learners of that language, and not native speakers, the responsibility placed on language teaching education programmes is to transform the process of language teacher preparation into a never-ending quest for quality. Thus, language teachers become alert to review their teaching techniques and take initiatives that trigger betterment in achieving pedagogical and learning objectives. These are the fundamental

elements of basic teacher education, which should be in an official position of high premium in the Algerian context.

The professional meetings of teachers, such as seminars, study days and the like can be of great prominence for both experienced and novice teachers. What is worthy with these professional meetings is that they can be thought-provoking, especially when the exchange of teaching practices techniques and methodologies is prevalent. In this respect, in workshops experienced teachers display their knowledge of content (techniques and methodologies of the teaching skills) and knowledge of pedagogy. However, novice teachers take profit from it and may be, change thoroughly, their attitudes and views on teaching accordingly. These facts can engender, in the Algerian scope, a significant diversion to teacher education development; the concept towards which many teachers around the world are moving by exploring new procedures and strategies and implement them in their daily teaching practices. In addition to this, the enhancement can be towards developing attitudes that would lead to open doors of a variety of teaching perspectives.

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