

## *Teacher Training SocioProfessional Context*

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In my previous communication (10th and 11th December 2002 in Mostaganem), I mentioned that teacher training and teacher education are two concepts to mean the same thing, but they generally refer to two different theoretical approaches to the qualification of teachers. On the one hand, there are educationalists who advocate education based on theoretical knowledge as the most important; on the other hand, academics emphasize training based on practical skills. I also mentioned some problems that teacher assistants are confronted with at the beginning of their career.

In this paper, I would like to continue about the same topic, adding other real teaching training problems that teachers, experienced or inexperienced alike, face.

English language teachers, like their colleagues in most other disciplines, are not “prepared” for their roles as teachers at all. Most prepare themselves by a method analogous to “learning by doing.” Perren(1994) writes that.

*"University teachers ... are not normally trained to teach at all, presumably because it is assumed that their students have been trained to learn."*

The typical teacher learns his or her craft on the job, and within a year or two s/he has developed the styles of, and attitudes toward, teaching that will probably last them their entire careers. . However, this teacher is likely to receive neither pedagogical training nor teaching experience because s/he does not hold any teaching assistantships of some kind. Moreover, apart from few technological institutes where an attempt is made to reconcile subject-matter with practical teaching, there is still a very limited provision for a specific training of teachers. The last but not the least, the few high normal schools are following the same programmes than university and thus, have little if any influence on teacher education and training. As far as the experienced teachers are concerned, they always rely on the years they spend in the field without feeding themselves with new approaches, techniques and skills. In addition, some teachers are more interested to put forward their career than to serve the institution, that is the department and the students.

To palliate all these problems, solutions are proposed to keep teachers informed about the new developments in education and teaching.

There is a great deal of variety in the approaches to the training of the teacher assistants:

-A pre service workshop should be created for teacher assistants so as to orient them to the goals of the department and general procedures in teaching.

-These teachers should be supervised by a senior member of the department who is trained in English language pedagogy.

- The supervisor gets weekly meetings with the teacher assistants to discuss common problems and undertake course planning .
- The teachers observe a course given by an experienced teacher whose class serves as a "demonstration class."
- An ongoing process of supervision should be held so as to discuss the teachers' progress.

This suggestion can suit post-graduate students who are preparing a Magister under the supervision of a Professor or a "Maitre de Conférences". This implies that training programmes must become much broader in scope. Teacher assistants would benefit from the kind of internship and residency that doctors-to-be undergo prior to receiving a diploma. Interns and residents perform all the duties of experienced doctors, but they do so under close supervision. By the time their training program is completed, they have confirmed not only their newly acquired knowledge but also their skills in applying that knowledge. Teacher assistants are needed to give the same kinds of opportunity to learn their craft and to demonstrate that learning.

In fact, the teacher assistant has also different responsibilities to play in addition to the lectures or courses s/he delivers. Such duties include teaching a variety of courses at different levels in the curriculum, advising students, serving on departmental and university committees such as personnel and curriculum, evaluating student learning in various kinds of courses, planning and developing curricula, scheduling courses, compiling bibliographies and reading lists, ordering materials for the faculty library, carrying out research, and so forth.

On the other hand, experienced teachers should be furnished with new skills and knowledge for changing educational conditions so as to get rid of the routine. They need periodic opportunities to reimmerse themselves in the target language and culture. Unlike the chemists or the historians who can revitalize their skills and knowledge at a neighbouring research university, they can accomplish this only by residence in the target culture. Furthermore, the experienced teachers need to be even more sensitive to individual differences among learners-to learner interests, needs, and abilities and to differing learner styles.

The quality of teachers will develop only if pedagogical innovations and curricula are stimulated in the department, the faculty and the university.

In this way, a department teacher's values and attitudes affect his or her ability to cope with change, to tolerate instructional innovation, to accept changing relationships with other teachers or other departments. Activities in this area include planning workshops and personal growth seminars.

#### - Socio Professional Context

The Algerian university-and all the educational institutions-is living a dramatic and an unfortunate situation because of certain major facts. First, teachers have resigned in doing their job correctly. The salaries of university employees have fallen behind those of the public and private sectors (banks, firms such as SONATRACH, the post-office, etc.)

During the past three years (1999-2002), salaries in the general salary market in Algeria (public and private

sector) have increased (cumulatively) by far more than the salaries of academic employees in the country. Comparisons made with the general salary market revealed that academic employees lag significantly behind the general market, especially in respect of the total package. The pecuniary considerations are totally legitimate and should be taken into account in the global vision of employment. Is it not illogical and shameful to increase the salary of a category of people in a circumspect manner whereas we refuse the smallest "bits" to the teachers? Solutions can be found , but our political leaders privilege deceitful manoeuvres to a real dialogue.

Second, the problem of lodging is an acute one. How can a teacher prepare a lecture properly if he is not living in a decent accommodation? Some colleagues working with me in the same faculty find it difficult to commute during three days without finding a shelter where to reside. Teaching is not only a question of method and pedagogy ,but it is also an art ,which can be possible only in solving the teachers'socio professional problems.

Third, in the present socio-economic and political climate there are limitations to the amount by which universities can increase tuition fees (maybe through advice of IMF and the World Bank).As in most counties in the world, the level of the subsidy that the government provides to Algerian universities is being increasingly curtailed compared to the other ministries (the budget allotted to the Ministry of Mudjahiddin is two times and half superior to that of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research). Reduced income has also limited

the funds available to invest in employing post-graduate teachers who have the potentialities to do the job.

Teacher training is somehow interrelated with the socio professional problems that the teachers face in their daily life. How can a teacher concentrate and dispense lectures when s/he does not possess a home to prepare them? How can s/he prepare lectures when s/he does not have the necessary financial means to buy books to renew her or his knowledge?

If nothing is done to improve the teacher's status in the society and to restore the credibility to the university, no change can happen. One way to overcome this crisis is to make all the actors-political authorities and the teachers' representatives-round a table to develop a global, critical approach in education as a whole and debate real questions about the future of the university:

- what type of society would we like to build up?
- what kind of learners should be trained?
- what programmes of teaching and training should be adopted?
- which pedagogical methods and techniques should be recommended?
- what training should teachers receive in this vision?

They should also discuss the teacher's status and the socio professional conditions in which s/he is living regarding her or his diploma, competence and requirements in comparison with officials serving in other sectors, getting the same criteria. It is in this way that a big jump can be done in teaching and training.

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