

Teachers, Full Stakeholders in Their Profession or Simple Programme Implementers?

Dr KESKES Saïd

Foreign Language Department

Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences

University of Ferhat Abbas Setif

Abstract

This study is conducted as an attempt to sensitize classroom teachers that it is high time for them to cease relying solely on ready made solutions. One effective way is to invite them kindly to do research in their classrooms. Because, after all, action research is not an end in itself; it is a means to a further end: teacher development. The aim of this study is primarily to create a sense of professionalism among teachers. By professionalism we mean going beyond the initial training and including a focus on teacher self-evaluation, investigation of different dimensions of teaching by the teacher, and examination of the teacher's approach to teaching. On the basis of the results obtained from teachers' preliminary investigation survey, teachers' questionnaire, and the Inspector General's interview, it is deduced that action research of teachers is a challenge that secondary school teachers under the reform moves are striving to reach. Teachers have much knowledge about the nature of learning; created from their experience as learners, the input they receive through their learning and the input resulting from professional development practices undertaken (e.g. reading, observation, reflection and so on). This creates a wealth of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning. However, these

beliefs, while well formed and powerful are sometimes handicapped while teachers try to respond to a change (e.g. curriculum change). Educationalists, namely syllabus designers and trainers are expected to help and support teachers throughout these moves. They should, therefore, provide teaching resources and adequate training to teachers and why not involve them in the design and implementation of new syllabi.

1. Introduction

It has been said that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories, those with twenty years experience and those with one year experience repeated twenty times. In other words sheer time on the job does not ensure fruitful experience and professional growth. Teachers can advance in their professional expertise throughout their careers. Such advances do not depend only on formal learning, but also it takes place when teachers work on their owns or in groups, by using their teaching routine and their reflections on it. It is very important to get initial training to reach recognised teaching qualifications besides that learning. However, this training should be the beginning, not the end, of teacher professional development. Teacher development is a model that should not be only based on the premise that teachers develop their professional knowledge and educational practice by passively acquiring those things from a set of different sources (which encompass mainly textbooks, articles on pedagogy, conferences organized by the

administrative bodies, or what is called the development of the 'received professional knowledge' (Wallace, 1991)). It should consider first and foremost the generative and creative powers of the teachers in the classroom. It rests on the assumptions that these powers are released when the teachers investigate their professional settings (McNiff, 2002; Whitehead, 2004). The idea of *self reflection* is central to teachers' investigative practice. *Reflection* on practice can be managed in different ways. Among these, an approach that we intend to explore in our work, the one that is often called action research. Action research is a process of empowering those on the 'front-lines' of action, namely teachers, to conduct research into their own practice, rather than relying on and- more importantly- being subject to- research findings of outsiders. There is a number of countries where the curricula are dictated by the state (as is the case of Algeria). As a matter of fact, teachers' main job was to implement what policy makers tell them to teach, using methods others develop, namely syllabus designers and inspectors. True, suggestions of the syllabus designers and inspectors are not to be totally lost sight of. Rather, they can be a good source of inspiration for teachers. Yet they must not be regarded as rules of good conduct. Instead, they are best seen as tools which can be made use of. Action research has a potential to enhance professional development and narrow the gap between aspirations and reality. When teachers engage in action research they gain new knowledge, develop reflective thinking, expand their pedagogical repertoire, and take charge of their craft (Wallace, 2000).

2. Literature Review

2. 1. Teacher Development

Professional development (professional development and teacher development are used interchangeably throughout this article) is defined as an ongoing learning process in which teachers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their learners. It is an evolving process of self-disclosure, reflection and growth that ensures the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice. Indeed, there are very many definitions offered for the term teacher development and it is not possible to cite them all in this work. But we can provide some characteristics of that very process.

2. 1. 1. Characteristics of Teacher Development

- Teacher development is a lifelong process in order for teachers to stay current within their field of activity, be it technical, managerial or educational such as the case of our study. It is perceived as a long- term process as it acknowledges the fact that teachers learn over time
- Teacher development is based on constructivism rather than on a 'transmission- oriented model'. As a consequence, teachers are treated as active learners (Lieberman, 1994; McLaughlin and Zarrow, 2001) who are engaged in the concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation and reflection (Dadds, 2001; Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; King and Newmann, 2000)

- It is perceived as a process that takes place within a particular context. The most successful TD opportunities are ‘on- the- job learning’ activities such as study groups, AR and portfolios (Woods and McQuarrie, 1999)
- Many identify this process as one that is intimately linked to school reform (Guskey, 1995; Looocks- Horsley, 1998) which is affected by the coherence of the school programme (King and Newmann, Op Cit)
- A teacher is conceived of as a reflective practitioner, someone who enters the profession with a certain knowledge base, and who will acquire new knowledge and experiences based on that prior knowledge (Cochran Smith and Lytle, 2001; Jenlink and Kinnucan- Welsch, 1999; Liberman, Op Cit). In so doing the role of professional development is to aid teachers in building new pedagogical theories and practices (Darling- Hammond and McLaughlin, Op Cit; Schifter, Russell, and Bastable, 1999), and to help them develop their expertise in the field (Dadds, Op Cit)
- Teacher development is conceived as a collaborative process (Darling- Hammond and McLaughlin, Ibid). Even though there may be some opportunities for isolated work and reflection, most effective teacher development occurs when there are meaningful interactions (Clement and Vanderberghe, 2000), not only among teachers themselves, but also between teachers, administrators, parents and other community members (Grace, 1999)
- Teacher development may look and be very different in diverse settings, and even within a single setting, it can have a variety of dimensions (Scribner, 1999). It is clear in the literature that different factors within a workplace (one significant variable of the ‘context’), such as school structure and school culture, can influence the teachers’ sense of efficacy and professional motivation (Scribner, Op Cit)
- It is an awareness- raising practice, which is intended to develop the teachers’ conscious understanding of the principles underlying English foreign language teaching and/ or the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons (Ellis, 1985: 227).

2. 1. 2. Models and Types of Teacher Professional Development

There are a number of models that have been developed and implemented in different countries to promote and support Teachers' professional development from the beginning of their career until they retire. In literature professional development models are grouped into three categories (Davis and Pearce, 2000): *self-development*, *co-operative development* and *formal development*. The chart below summaries the models included in each category.

Figure 01: Models and Types of Teacher Professional Development

Models of Teacher Professional Development	Techniques included in each Model
Self Development	Constant Reflection Diary Writing Recording Lessons Professional Development Portfolios Reading The Internet
Co-operative Development	Sharing with Colleagues Peer Coaching or Peer Observation Mentoring Dialogue Journals Study Groups Lesson Study
Formal Development	Participatory Practitioner Research Training Programmes Conferences, Seminars and Short Courses

Teacher development comprises many aspects, types and models, most of these latter can overlap and integrate systematically under the same heading that is teacher action research, which we will discuss in the next section, and which builds the core theme of our study.

2. 2 Action Research

Action research means different things to different educators. To some it may be something as simple as observing a class and keeping a journal about observations. To others it may be as complex as a longitudinal study examining the reading development of several students over several years. Of the innumerable definitions of action research that have been proposed over the last forty years, a small selection is set out in the coming paragraphs.

‘Action Research is a systematic, reflective, collaborative process that examines a situation for the purpose of planning, implementing, and evaluating change’ (Garner, 1996).

‘Action Research is a form of self- reflective inquiry carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice, or enhancing understanding. It is often collaborative’ (Nunan, 1997: 229).

‘Action Research is conducted by teachers and for teachers. It is small- scale, contextualised, localized, and aimed at discovering, developing, or monitoring changes to practice’ (Wallace, 2000).

‘Action Research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because Action Research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be a form of self-reflective practice’ (McNiff, 2002: 1).

Action research is known by other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put it simply, action research is learning by doing.

2. 2. 1. Types of Action Research

Part of the confusion we find when we hear the term 'action research' is that there are different types of action research depending upon the participants involved. A plan of research can involve a single teacher investigating an issue in his or her classroom, a group of teachers working on a common problem, or a team of teachers and others focusing on a school- or district- wide issue.

- *Individual action research.* This does not directly involve any one else except the teacher concerned; obvious examples are writing personal field notes and keeping a diary. It is more flexible, less professional risky and more easily implemented than others (Ferrance, 2000).
- *Collaborative action research.* We have mentioned earlier that the aim of action research is encouraging teachers to move away from individualistic version of action research to a collaborative version. This collaboration can be done with the learners, institutions and colleagues (Burnes, 2004).
- *Collaboration with learners.* Learners can be involved in action research; this may mark a benefit for both teachers and their learners, in which the latter are given the opportunities to research and compare their abilities and levels. Teachers, also, would have the benefit by having insights into how their learners respond to the exercises implemented (Wallace, Op Cit).
- *Collaboration in the same department/ school/ institution.* The advantage of this type of collaboration is ease of contact and

sharing of experiences. In this case, it is considered as an easiest means of collecting data like observing each others' classes (Ferrance, Op Cit).

- *Collaboration with colleagues outside school/ institution.* This is also called school wide/ district wide action research. The advantage of this collaboration is to get insights from other fellow- professionals that work in different contexts (Wallace, Ibid; Ferrance, Ibid).

- *Collaboration with colleagues in a different area of expertise.* For example, the collaboration between the teacher and the trainer leads to a workable division of work, in the sense that they would collect different kinds of data. The problem here is that the teacher would become junior partner rather than an equal partner (Wallace, Ibid).

- *Collaboration with colleagues in other countries.* This kind of collaboration is mostly encouraged with nowadays facilities namely the Internet. The advantage of this is to compare the results of doing action research (Ferrance, Ibid).

2. 2. 2. Rationale for Action Research

Action research can be a worthwhile pursuit for teachers for a number of reasons. Foremost among these is simply the desire to know more. Good teachers are, after all, themselves students, and often look for ways to expand upon their existing knowledge.

✓ **Focus on school issue, problem, or area of collective interest.** It can be very helpful for teachers to pick up threads suggested in academic circles, and weave them into their own classrooms. It is also comforting for parents, or education administrators outside of the school, to know that a teacher is not just blindly following what the latest study seems to suggest, but is transforming the knowledge into something meaningful.

- ✓ **Form of Teacher professional development.** Research and reflection allow teachers to grow and gain confidence in their work. Doing action research influences teachers' thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to share and communicate, and attitudes toward the process of change. Through action research, teachers learn about themselves, their students, their colleagues, and can determine ways to continually improve.
- ✓ **Collegial interactions.** *'Isolation is one of the downsides of teaching* (Ferrance, Ibid: 14)'. Action research in pairs or by teams allows time to talk with others about teaching. As a team teachers can examine various instructional strategies, learning activities, and curricular materials used in the classroom. Through these discussions with colleagues they develop stronger relationships.
- ✓ **Potential to impact school change.** As teachers get into action research, they are more apt to look at questions that address school and district concerns rather than questions that affect the individual teacher. This process creates new patterns of collegiality, communication, and sharing.
- ✓ **Reflect on own practice.** Opportunities for teachers to evaluate themselves in schools are often few, and usually happen only in an informal manner. AR can serve as a chance to really take a look at one's own teaching in a structured manner.
- ✓ **Improved communications.** Team work within the school or district brings individuals together for a shared purpose. (Sources: Ferrance, Ibid; Pine, 1981; Little, 1981).

All in all, action research is continual professional development- a direct route to improve teaching and learning. Seeking to understand and acting on the best teachers know. It

describes how most educators hope to live and grow as professionals.

3. Objectives of the Study

First, the study tries to shed some light on the importance of doing research especially for teachers of English who teach according to the newly adopted syllabus. Teachers need to prepare their own teaching materials, lessons and unit plans through action research policy resorting mostly to the web quest to give them certain facilities. Second, the study purports to investigate the possible ways in which teachers could develop themselves. Teaching and research could be developed simultaneously when teachers undertake research to improve learning and teaching. In other words, teachers can become researchers in their classrooms achieving many professional gains which accrue from the extension of their role as they still comply to their prior tasks of teaching. Action research is a relatively new concept in the area of educational research. Given the fact that it is professionally promising, it might be deemed wise to investigate its implications in the Algerian foreign language teaching context. The very fact that action research takes place at all levels of education, it may not be easy to study its effects on all of them. For this reason, we have chosen the secondary level for methodological convenience. That is to say, secondary schools involve a great number of experienced teachers who are all bachelors of Arts in English, be they full or part time teachers. It is very important to note that teacher research is not a remedy for all the classroom ills. Rather, it claims to provide teachers with better and deeper insights into the subtleties and intricacies of classroom life.

Far from claiming that the problems of the Algerian foreign language classroom will persist if they do not undertake

research in their professional settings, we however claim that time is ripe to get rid of the long established habits of some teachers to exclusively rely on outsiders (syllabus designers or inspectors) and seek new ways of teaching. Teacher research, if taken alone, is not a guarantee of optimal professional development. Teachers must grow as reflective practitioners (Zeichner, 1994). Hence, our study considers reflection upon the classroom practices because they are the immediate results of action research. In fact, teacher research is meaningless if it is devoid of reflective practice. Arguably, reflective thinking is the covert side of teacher-initiated inquiry.

4. Method

4. 1. Participants

The population targeted in this research work is secondary school English teachers, who have all an experience of teaching according to the newly adopted syllabus. This population covers all the schools located in the urban area of Sétif and some schools located in six rural areas. It concerns twenty-nine schools making a total of one hundred and thirty teachers. The fact that all teachers are concerned by the process of teacher development and action research, be they performing in rural or urban areas, justifies our choice of dealing with both areas. This will enable us to get the maximum of information and ensure a wide range of varied responses. Moreover, these areas embrace a diversity of social status; teachers have access to the internet, libraries and documents. Since it is impossible for us, within the limited scope of the study, to deal with all schools located in rural areas of Sétif (unlike the case with those located in the urban area), these schools have been designed according to their geographical locations. In other words, we dealt with some schools that are situated north, south, east and west of Sétif. The urban area comprises thirteen schools and covers the great number (sixty-two) of English teachers in the whole city. The rural areas we chose, on the other hand, consist of sixteen schools and make a total of sixty-eight teachers. In this research we opt for the systematic sampling. This method is a modified form of simple

random sampling. It involves selecting subjects from a population list in a systematic rather than a random fashion. One hundred and thirty preliminary investigation surveys and one hundred and thirty questionnaires were handed to the same teachers. However, only one hundred and twenty were given back though we insisted so much on this aspect. These latter will be studied, interpreted and analysed.

Procedure: Systematic Sampling

- We made a list of all the respondents from the school institutions.
- Since the sheets include no names, these were assigned codes, say from one to one hundred and twenty.
- Every fourth person has been selected.
- The starting point for the selection was chosen at random.
- Our sample comprises then thirty teachers.
- We followed this procedure both for the preliminary investigation survey and the questionnaire.

4. 2. Instrument

The descriptive method was purposely adopted to achieve a set of attempts; for instance, to encourage teachers to be highly professional in their work and this can well be done by exhorting them to be classroom explorers. The descriptive method was fulfilled along with an analytical approach of the data collected. In collecting the data we used a preliminary investigation survey and a questionnaire that were addressed to teachers of English in the twenty-nine Secondary Schools. In addition to that, as stated before, we set an interview with the Inspector General of English for confirmation and further information.

4. 3. Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

4. 3. 1 Teachers' Preliminary Investigation Survey and Questionnaire

When administering the methods, the number of teachers was one hundred and thirty, while filtering the methods seven

teachers did not give back their sheets, though we insisted a lot on this point, whereas three sheets contained no answers and would not be taken into consideration. After collecting the data, we examined the answers. Then we calculated the percentage of each option taking the number thirty as one hundred percent (100%). Data has been treated in tables, and information was presented and analysed according to the obtained rate (not from high to low or the inverse). For the presentation of the results, we used for each item presented in a table, a circle divided into sectors, following the percentages of choices presented into the tables.

4. 3. 2. Transcribing the Interview

With respect to recording what is being said, the main options are audio recording and note-taking. However, both these methods have advantages and disadvantages. The use of tape recorder can be intrusive and the subsequent data transcribing process is very time-consuming. Note-taking, is also problematic as it requires that every thing is written down quickly (taking notes, using abbreviations and key words). For our transcription we opted for note-taking and this is what our interviewee chose, then we analyzed the answers item by item.

4. 4. Results and Discussion

Results of some of the items in teachers' questionnaire are presented in this section. Some of the responses received rendered significant results, while some others did not. This section will briefly present those responses which were statistically significant. However, it should be noted that for the purpose of not making this paper lengthy and hence difficult to read, only some of the most prominent responses (that is, items 09, 10, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28) are briefly discussed.

In **item 09**, teachers were asked about their conceptualizations of the meaning of teacher professional development.

Table 01: What does the concept of teacher professional development means to you?

	Means by which you can stay interested in your job	A process that is never finished	A process that help you improve your teaching
Number	08	09	24
%	26.66	30	80

Twenty four teachers view the process of teacher development as a tool that helps improve their teaching. Added to this, nine teachers believe that it is a process that is never finished, i.e. a life long process. Eight teachers consider it merely a means to stay interested in their job.

Item 10 asked about the formal or informal strategies that teachers use for their professional development, whether unconsciously or as a matter of policy.

Table 02: What are the strategies (formal or informal) you use for your professional development (either as a matter of policy or perhaps almost unconsciously).

	Attending conferences	Reading professional journals	Learners feedback	Feedback from colleagues	Teaching diary	Seminars
Number	12	15	08	14	05	26
%	40	50	26.66	46.66	16.66	86.66

In their professional development journey, teachers use different strategies, formal and informal, consciously and unconsciously, to achieve their destination. Results indicated that

the mostly used strategy in teacher professional development is seminars (twenty six teachers say this). Although seminars help in teacher professional development, they are not a sufficient tool and should not be the unique one. Many teachers (fifteen as indicated above) read professional journals, others receive feedback from their colleagues (fourteen teachers), some attend conferences (twelve teachers), some (eight teachers) depend on their learners' feedback and others (only five teachers) use teaching diaries.

In item 24, teachers asked about their opinions concerning the idea of teachers carrying out small-scale pieces of research on their teaching.

Table 03: What do you think of the idea of teachers carrying out small- scale pieces of research on their teaching?

	Good idea	Bad idea	No answer	Total
Number	27	03	00	30
%	90	10	00	100

Item 25 asked teachers whether or not they feel that doing research is an important part of their job.

Table 04: Do you feel that doing research is an important part of your job?

	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Number	24	06	00	30
%	80	20	00	100

Item 26 seeks to show whether or not inspectors encourage teachers to do research in their classes.

Table 05: Does your inspector encourage you to do research?

	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Number	19	11	00	30
%	63.33	36.33	00	100

We conclude, from the above results, that the majority of teachers (twenty seven) think that it is a good idea when teachers carry out small-scale pieces of research on their teaching. However, only twenty four of them believe that research is an important part of their teaching. Some teachers are encouraged in their settings to do research, for instance nineteen teachers benefit from the support and encouragement of their inspectors. Yet talking about research is not something that normally goes on among English teachers in our context. Results show that only nine teachers out of thirty speak about research with their peers. We believe that talking about research create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn from each others throughout the school year.

Item 27 aimed to reveal the ways that enable teachers to treat their enduring teaching problems

Table 06: What are the ways that enable you to treat your enduring teaching problems? (You can choose more than one answer)

	Joining the learners and discussing with them	Reading materials that have to do with the given problem	Discussions with other professionals to solve such problem	You implement any idea that comes to your mind
Number	22	09	20	08
%	73.33	30	66.66	26.66

Often the hardest part in classroom research is deciding on a focus. Teacher research does not require a precise hypothesis. Although it is not always necessary, teachers can begin with a problem. Since twenty-eight teachers are eager to know what seem problematic in their classes, we believe that they are on the right go to engage in action research. Twenty-two teachers are already joining their learners and discussing with them, twenty opt for discussing with professionals to solve their teaching problems, nine read materials that have to do with the given problem and only eight implement any idea that comes to their mind.

Item 28 sought to show which populations teachers consult while collaborating.

Table 07: While collaborating, which population do you consult?

	Your learners	Your colleagues	The staff of your school	Other teachers at other schools	With specialists in the field	Others
Number	16	19	07	13	08	01
%	53.33	63.33	23.33	43.33	26.66	03.33

To explore teaching, teachers need to accept responsibility for their own teaching, but they should also know that they need others to explore. It is worth to mention that a key component of AR is sharing what they have learnt. As individuals with or without official training and education, only teachers can understand what they are trying to do in class, how it works out for them, and what they learn from it. However, exploration cannot be done in vacuum. As Edge explains, ‘I want to investigate my own teaching. I cannot do that without

understanding it, and I cannot understand it on my own. I need other people: colleagues and learners' (1992: 4). Fanslow (1997: 166) says this in a different way: 'seeking to explore by ourselves alone, is like trying to use a pair of scissors with only one blade'. In their collaborative process nineteen teachers collaborate with their colleagues and sixteen prefer to consult their learners. There are thirteen teachers who favour collaborating with other colleagues, but outside their institutions: teachers in other schools. The rest of teachers either consult specialists in the field (eight teachers) or the staff of their school (seven teachers).

6. Pedagogical Implications

6. 1. Implications for Teachers

Teachers' Professional development

- Teacher professional development must be thought of as a long-term process, which begins with initial preparation and only ends when the teacher retires from the profession. This new approach to the education and development of teachers requires a transformation of processes and policies that support teachers, their education, their work and their growth in the profession.
- Teacher professional development has a significant impact on the success of educational reforms and on learners' learning. The more opportunities the teachers have to be subjects and objects of educational reform, the more effective the reform and teachers' work is.
- Teacher professional development must be systematically planned, supported, funded and researched to guarantee the effectiveness of this process.
- Teachers must be encouraged to design and implement experiences and opportunities that help in their growth as teachers and professionals.
- Teacher development includes much more than looking for ways to improve teaching in order to adapt to the

demands of a job. To truly develop as a teacher, the teacher needs to be free to explore teaching, and explore his needs to understand the idea that development should be based only on the concept of improvement. Instead, the teacher needs to be able to explore teaching to see his own teaching differently.

- Technology and distance education should be used as means of supporting teacher professional development. However, we must be aware of the limitations teachers may have. For example, not all teachers have access to computers, and not all teachers know how to use particular forms of technology.

Action research assists teachers in several ways including the following:

- It assists them in becoming more systematic observers of their behaviour and/ or that of their learners during instruction.
- It fosters their professional growth as teachers.
- It builds self confidence in their teaching abilities; and
- It helps them project goals for continued research.
- Action research influence teachers' thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to share and communicate, and attitudes toward the process of change. Through action research, teachers learn about themselves, their learners, their colleagues, and can determine ways to continually improve.
- Exploration is enhanced through description. Descriptions are audio or video taping interaction, making short transcriptions, taking snap shots, or by simply writing down descriptions from memory. Such descriptions can then be studied, and based on these descriptions teachers can think about their teaching and generate alternative ways to teach. Descriptions allow teachers to do this because they provide a mirror image that teachers can use

to reflect on teaching. In short, it is through descriptions, more than prescriptions, teachers can gain deeper awareness of their teaching and to see their teaching differently.

- Action research in pairs or by teams of teachers allows time to talk with others about teaching and learning strategies.
- In any school or educational setting, there are teachers with different levels of experience, knowledge, skill, and expertise. Mutual sharing of knowledge and experience is a valuable source of professional growth.
- Classrooms are not only places where learners learn, they are also places where teachers can learn through action research. Indeed, action research is a learning process, the fruits of which are the real and material changes in (a) what people do, (b) how they interact with the world and with others, (c) what they mean and what they value, and (d) the discourses in which they understand and interpret their world.
- Opportunities for teachers to evaluate themselves in schools are often few, and usually happen in an informal manner. Action research can serve as a chance to really take a look at one's own teaching in a structured manner.
- Teaching without reflection is insufficient. Can twenty years of teaching the same way and doing the same thing twenty times be called development? Teachers need to constantly reflect on their experience and remain observant so as not to fall into the trap of blindly following routine.
- Critical reflection is essential for greater understanding. Reflection can help teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking.

6. 2. Implications for Teachers' Trainers

- Teacher education must shift from a focus on preservice training alone to lifelong professional development (Lange, 1991).
- Reflective practice should be a target of any teacher training course.
- Although at times it is recommended to do so, trainers should not present trainees with ready made teaching methods, instead they can develop the microteaching techniques. Microteaching, in which different skills are practiced under carefully controlled conditions, is based on the idea that teaching is a complex set of activities which can be broken down into different skills. These skills can be practiced individually, and later combined with others. Usually in microteaching, one trainee teacher teaches a part of a lesson to a small group of his or her classmates. The lesson may be recorded on tape or videotape and later discussed in individual or group tutorials. Each session generally focuses on a specific teaching task. Microteaching thus involves a scaling down of teaching because class size, lesson length, and teaching complexity are all reduced.
- Since teachers are the key to the success of reforms, they must improve their competencies (Curtain and Pesola, 1994: 245-250; and Glisan, 1996: 73-75). To ensure this ongoing professional growth, authorities must enhance the experiences of teachers (and, by extension, their learners) by encouraging decentralization of responsibility for learning, and thus promoting self-reliance, collaboration, and reflection. In short, teachers, too, have to be viewed as learners and they need to learn together, e.g. in mentoring and coaching one another. The educational system must support, both conceptually and financially, the teachers' endeavors as life long learners.

- Professional development would benefit from training sessions. Training sessions should be designed to present current knowledge on the learning and teaching of languages. The training sessions may cover:
 - The dissemination of theoretical and practical information on the latest trends in effective methodology for foreign language learning
 - Research on how learners learn
 - Classroom management techniques
 - Integration of critical content into the language curriculum
 - Integration of technology into the delivery and practice of language acquisition skills (Widdowson, 1990).
- For significant change to occur, each individual teacher's needs must be addressed. The teacher must be involved experientially in the process of development, since, by itself, knowledge of how to change does not mean change will be initiated. For improvement to occur, new skills have to be guided, practiced, and reflected upon in collaboration with colleagues.
- It is the responsibility of schools and trainers to provide opportunities for continued professional education and to encourage teachers to participate in them. In order for such opportunities to take place, they need to be planned, supported, and rewarded (Zimmer-Loew, 1996).

7. Conclusion

Though some believe that research is not part and parcel of the daily life of teachers because they claim that teachers' primary job is to teach and not to explore, action research can open up new perspectives for the teachers. Still, the subjects of our study are striving to take part in this new educational trend

despite the pressure they are under to cope with the new demands of reforms. Teachers may also feel they lack the technical knowledge of research required for them to carry out worthwhile studies. True, teachers are learning by virtue of being involved in teaching, from their professional teaching practices; still much more can be learned if they are engaged in action research. Basically, research is very often associated with learning and improvement. We are not claiming that teachers should be full time researchers but questioning their work can be a good step in any attempt to bring satisfactory results to their teaching settings. To conclude, teacher action research or exploratory practice must be encouraged and supported by the authorities. In fact, action research is not the unique method; rather, it is a means of rethinking of every single aspect of the teaching- learning situation.

References

- Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change: A re-appraisal. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41 (6), 977-1002.
- Clement, M., & Vandenberghe, R. (2000). Teachers' professional development a solitary or collegial adventure? In: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 81-101.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (2001). Beyond certainty: Taking an inquiry stance on practice. In: Lieberman, A., Miller, L., *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Curtain, H., & Pesola, C. (1994). *Languages and children: Making the match*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Dadds, M. (2001). Continuing professional development: Nurturing the expert within. In: Soler, J., Craft, A., Burgess, H. *Teacher development: Exploring our own practice*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing and the Open University.

- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M.W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. In: Phi Delta Kappan, 76/8, 597-604.
- Davis, P., & Pearce, E. (2000). Success in English teaching. Oxford University Press.
- Edge, J. (1992). Cooperative development. Essex, England: Longman.
- Ellis, R. (1985). Activities and procedures for teacher training, ELT Journal, 40/2.
- Fanslow, J. f. (1997). Postcard realities. In: Casanave, C. P. and Schecter, S. R. (Eds.), *On becoming a language educator* (1997: 157-172). Mahwah, NJ; Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ferrance, E. (2000). *Action research*. LAB: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory. www.lab.brown.edu
- Garner, B. (1996, May). Using action research: Challenges and opportunities for the beginner. Paper presented at the Greaser. St. Louis Sixth. Action Research Conference.
- Glisan, E. W. (1996). A collaborative approach to professional development. In R. C. Lafayette (Ed.), *National standards: A catalyst for reform* (pp. 57-95). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.
- Grace, D. (1999). Paradigm lost. In: *Independent School*, 59/1, 54-57.
- Guskey, T.R. (1995). Professional development in education: In search of the optimal mix. In: Guskey, T.R. Huberman. M. *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jenlink, P.M., & Kinnucan-Welsch, K. (1999). Learning ways of caring, learning ways of knowing through communities of professional development. In: *Journal for a Just and Caring education*, 5/4, 367-385.
- King, M.B., & Newmann, F.M. (2000). Will teacher learning advance

school goals? In: *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp.576-580.

- Lange, D. (1991). Implications of recent reports on teacher education reform for departments of foreign languages and literatures. *ADFL Bulletin*, 23, 28-34.
- Lieberman, A. (1994). Teacher development: Commitment and challenge. In: Grimmett, P.P, Neufeld, J. (1994). *Teacher development and the struggle for authenticity: Professional growth and restructuring in the context of change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Little, J. W. (1981). *School success and staff development: The role of staff development in urban desegregated schools*. Boulder, CO: Center for Action Research, Inc.
- Loucks-Horsley, S. (1998). The role of teacher and learning in systemic reform: A focus on professional development. In: *Science Educator*, 7(1), 1-6.
- McLaughlin, M.W., & Zarrow, J. (2001). Teacher engages in evidence-based reform: Trajectories of teachers' inquiry, analysis, and action. In: Lieberman, A.; Miller, L., *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- McNiff, J. (2002). Action Research for Professional Development. www.jeanmcniff.com
- McNiff, J. (2002). Action Research for Professional Development. www.jeanmcniff.com.
- Nunan, D. (1997). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pine, G. J. (1981). *Collaborative action research: A developmental approach*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Schifter, D., Russell, S.J., & Bastable, V. (1999). Teaching to the big ideas. In: Solomon, M.Z., *The diagnostic teacher: Constructing new approaches to professional development*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Scribner, J. (1999). Professional development: Untangling the influence of work context in teacher learning. In: *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(2), 238-266.
- Wallace, M. J. (1991). *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A reflective approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace, M. J. (2000). *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge Teacher Training and Development
- Wallace, M. J. (2000). *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge Teacher Training and Development.
- Whitehead, J. (2004). What counts as evidence in self-studies of teacher education practices? In: Loughran, J. & Russell, T. (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching Practice*. Dordrecht; Kluwer academic publishers
- Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Woods, F., & McQuarrie, F. (1999). On-the-job learning. In: *Journal of staff development*, 20(3), 10-13.
- Zeichner, K. M. (1994). Research on teacher thinking and different views of reflective practice in teaching and teacher education. In: Carlgén, I., Handal, G. and Vaage, S., *Teachers' minds and actions- Research on teachers' thinking and practice*. London: Falmer Press, p.9-27.
- Zimmer- Loew, H. (1996). Professional policy in foreign language education: What it is and how we get it. In R. C. Lafayette (Ed.), *National standards: A catalyst for reform* (pp. 23-38). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.