# Beyond Training Approaches to Teacher Education and Language Teaching

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## Abstract

A training model of teacher development is contrasted with a developmental model, and the assumptions behind training and development are compared from the perspective of approach, content, process, teacher roles and teacher education roles. A training based model is seen to be inappropriate for many dimensions of teacher education, because it treats teachers as technicians and undervalues the nature of teaching. A teacher development approach is seen to be more appropriate in that it looks at teacher education as a process of continual growth and development. The emphasis is on providing teachers with tools with which they can explore their classroom attitude and practices. Implications for this approach for second language teacher education are discussed, and a number of procedures are illustrated which focus on teacher development rather than on teacher training.

Two approaches have emerged in second and foreign language teacher education programmes in recent years. One is education as "training", a model that has characterized traditional approaches to teacher education and which still represents the mainstream of current practice. A second approach is referred to as "development". The contrast between training and development (with the term "education" being a more general and inclusive term) is a useful way of characterizing and describing options in teacher education (Lange, 1983; Richards, 1987; Freeman, 1989), and in this paper it will be used to describe alternatives available to those planning teacher education pro-grammes. To clarify the difference between these two approaches and the implications for teacher education programmes, I will examine five aspects of teacher education, contrasting a "training" versus "development" perspective for each one. They are Approach, Content, Process, Teacher Roles, and Teacher-Educator Roles.

## Teacher Education as Training

### 1. Approach

By "approach" I refer to the conceptual framework or philosophy underlying the programme, that is, the theory and assumptions about teaching and teacher education that provide the starting point for programme

development. A number of interrelated themes characterize a training perspective. Many of these are implicit rather than overt and have to be teased out or inferred from looking at the programmes themselves and how they are implemented.

(i) The first assumption is that student teachers or teachers-in-service enter the programme with deficiencies of different kinds (Breen et al. 1989). These may be deficiencies of knowledge about the subject matter (e.g. the English language, Curriculum Design, Reading, ESP) or lack of specific skills or competencies (e.g. in the use of computers or the ability to teach process writing).

(ii) The second assumption is that the characteristics of effective teaching are known and can be described in discrete terms, often as skills or competencies. Teaching is not viewed as mainly individual or intuitive but as something reducible to general rules and principles and derived from pre-existing knowledge sources.

(iii) A related assumption is that teachers can and should be changed, and that the direction of change can be laid out in advance, planned for, monitored, and tested.

(iv) Lastly, the teacher education programme is essentially theory driven and top-down. Experts may be the source of the new information, skills, and theory which underly the programme, or it may be based on new directions in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, or methodology.

## 2. Content

By content, I mean the goals, topics, and subject matter that the programme addresses. When teacher education is thought

of as training, goals are typically stated in terms of performance, and content is identified with skills and techniques and the theoretical rationale for those skills and techniques. Pre-and post-training differences can then be measured to determine the programme's effectiveness. For example, before training, teachers might be tested to see what their typical wait-time behaviours are when using questions. Following a workshop in which teachers are trained to monitor their use of questions, the teachers are tested to see to what extent their behaviours have been modified as a result of training.

## 3. Process

Process refers to the means by which the content of the programme is transmitted, that is, the techniques, activities and experiences used to impart new knowledge and skills to the teachers in training. A number of techniques are well suited to a training perspective. Some reflect a view of learning as "modeling": student teachers model the behaviours of master teachers or effective teachers or they model proven techniques of teaching. For example, micro-teaching offers trainers a chance to model new behaviours to teachers and then for teachers to practice and learn the new skills. Observation (either of teachers in the classroom or of model lessons on video) similarly allows student teachers to learn through modeling or imitation. Demonstration, simulation, and role play are also procedures that can be used to help teachers master new techniques, with the hope that they will later try them out in their own classrooms, incorporate them into their repertoire of teaching strategies and, hence, become better teachers.

## 4. Role of the teacher

What is the teacher-in-training's role in the process of teacher education from the training perspective? Essentially, the teacher is viewed as a technician. According to Zeichner and Liston (1987 : 27), "the teacher as technician would be concerned primarily with the successful accomplishment of ends decided by others". The effective teacher is also viewed as a skilled performer of a number of prescribed tasks. The prospective teacher is hence treated as an apprentice, and as a passive recipient of information and skills passed on to him or her by experts—the teacher educators. The teacher's chief responsibility is to try to suppress old habits and replace them with new ones, and to match his or her teaching style to that prescribed by a new method or guru.

## 5. Role of the teacher educator

From a training perspective, the teacher trainer is seen as an expert, as a catalyst for change, as a model teacher, and as the source of new ideas and information. His or her primary functions are to provide ideas and suggestions, to solve problems, and to intervene and point out better ways of doing things.

## Limitations of training

The training perspective characterized above varies in effectiveness. Teachers' behaviours can be changed, often as a result of relatively short periods of training. For example, in a study of the effects of training on teachers' questioning skills (Borg et al. 1970 : 82) a mini-course that consisted of a film explaining the concepts and training in the form of modeling, self-feedback, and micro-teaching, brought about significant changes in the teachers' use of questions. Training is well suited to the treatment of skills, techniques, and routines, particularly those that require a relatively low level of planning and reflection. There are times when a training approach may be all that is required, such as when a group of teachers in a school request a demonstration or workshop on the use of new computer software for the teaching of writing. But despite these advantages, a number of limitations are apparent.

1. Training reflects a very limited view of teachers and of teaching, one that reduces teaching to a technology and views teachers as little more than technicians. It likewise presents a fragmented and partial view of teaching, one which fails to capture the richness and complexity of classroom life and the teacher's role in it. It treats teaching as something atomistic rather than holistic (Britten, 1985).

2. It follows that training limits itself to those aspects of teaching that are trainable and does not address more subtle aspects of teaching, such as how the teacher's values and attitudes shape his or her response to classroom events. Yet these are crucial dimensions of teaching and should not be ignored in teacher education.

3. Training is not usually classroom based. The content chosen for inclusion in the training programme is typically pre-determined and selected according to trends in current theory (e.g. the application of insights from second language acquisition research), or according to current vogues in methodology.

4. With training, the locus of responsibility for development lies with the teacher trainer, rather than with teachers themselves.

Let us now compare a training perspective with a teacher development perspective.

## Teacher Education as Development

### 1. Approach

The distinction between training and development is not a new one in teacher education; it dates back at least to Dewey's influence on education at the turn of the century (Haberman, 1983). At the level of approach, some of the main conceptual features of teacher development are:

(i) Teachers are not viewed as entering the programme with deficiencies. Although there are obviously areas of content that teachers may not be familiar with and may wish to learn about, more emphasis is placed on what teachers know and do and on providing tools with which they can more fully explore their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

(ii) While teacher development acknowledges a theory of teaching as central to the process of planning and implementing a teacher education programme (Richards, 1987; Freeman, 1989), such a theoretical basis serves not as a source of doctrine which is used to shape and modify teachers, bringing them more closely to an ideal model, but serves as a starting point. Its role is to help teachers explore, define, and clarify their own classroom processes, and their individual theories of teaching and learning.

(iii) The programme does not start with the idea that teachers must change or discard current practices. As Freeman (1989 : 38) observes : Change does not necessarily mean doing something differently; it can be an affirmation of current practice : The teacher is [perhaps] unaware of doing something that is effective. The focus is, thus, more on expanding and deepening awareness.

(iv) The programme is discovery oriented and inquiry based, and bottom-up rather than top-down. Instead of the programme being dependent upon external knowledge and expertise, external input serves as only one source of information. It is complemented by teacher input, and both interact to help teachers understand their own attitudes, values, knowledge base, and practices, and their influence on classroom life.

### 2. Content

When teacher education is approached from the perspective of development, goals and content have to be articulated that go beyond skills and techniques and address higher level issues, including conceptual, attitudinal, and affective aspects of teaching. These include such hidden dimensions of teaching as the following :

(i) the decision-making and planning processes employed by teachers

(ii) the culture of teachers, that is, the concepts, value systems, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes that form the basis for teachers' classroom actions

(iii) teachers' views and perceptions of themselves

(iv) teachers' characterizations of their own approaches to teaching and their understanding of effective teaching

(v) roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. Hence, goals and content are required that engage teachers in reflecting critically on their own roles in the classroom. At the same time, opportunities are provided for student teachers and teachers-in-service to develop the ability to make judgements about the content and process of their work, and to "act and react—to initiate and respond" (Roderick 1986 : 308).

Reflection is a key component of teacher development. The skill of self-inquiry and critical thinking is seen as central for continued professional growth (Zeichner, 1982), and is designed to 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.

Development does not, therefore, necessarily seek to bring about any specific changes in teachers' behaviours, but to increase awareness, to deepen understanding of causes and consequences, and to broaden perceptions of what is and is not possible.

## 3. Process

The different kinds of goals needed with a teacher-development approach require a rethinking of the whole process by which teacher education is conducted. The higher-level cognitive and affective dimensions of teaching that the approach seeks to address cannot be achieved through modeling, practice, imitation or mastery learning. Other alternatives are therefore needed. A number of different kinds of learning experiences are being employed in an attempt to move beyond skills-training in teacher education (Richards and Nunan in press). These include:

(i) values clarification: activities that engage teachers in examining their own values, attitudes, and belief systems. These may be either relatively informal (e.g. discussion groups, focus groups, brainstorming) or more formal (e.g. questionnaire, structured interviews).

(ii) observation: activities in which teachers observe either other teachers at work or themselves through video recordings,

in association with activities that are designed to help teachers explore the significance of patterns of behaviour identified (Nunan, in press (a & b)). Observation is employed here not in order to demonstrate good teaching, but to provide data for reflection and analysis.

(iii) self-reflection: journal and diary accounts can be used to provide opportunities for student teachers to use the process of writing about their own teaching experiences as an analytical tool and to provide information for later reflection (Roderick, 1986, Bailey in press, Porter et al., in press).

(iv) self-reporting: the use of self-reports and inventories or check lists, in which teachers record information about what they did during a lesson and describe what worked or did not work (Richards, in press).

(v) project work: individual or collaborative projects in which teachers address specific classroom issues and then design projects around them.

(vi) problem solving: sessions in which participants bring examples of problems that have arisen out of their classroom experience, reflect on possible causes, and design strategies to address the problems.

(vii) action-research: small-scale classroom based projects in which teachers identify an aspect of their own classroom that they want to learn more about and then develop an action research programme involving data gathering, intervention, monitoring, and evaluation. Such research is not designed to produce generalizable theories and universal truths but is intended to provide a basis for practical classroom action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, Nunan in press (b)).

## 4. Role of the teacher

Teachers take on different roles and responsibilities in a programme which centers on development rather than training. The teacher is no longer in a subservient or subordinate role, passively and anxiously awaiting guidance, direction, and suggestions for change and improvement. Rather, the teacher is in a collaborative relationship with the teacher educator. The teacher is an investigator of his or her own classroom and his or her role in it and determines what aspects of the classroom he or she wants to know more about. The teacher, rather than the teacher educator now assumes the responsibility for identifying priorities for observation, analysis and, if necessary, intervention. The teacher-educator's role in this relationship is to help by providing information and resources that will assist in the process.

## 5. Role of the teacher educator

Changes in the role of the teacher in teacher development necessarily involve changes in the role of the teacher educator. The teacher educator has to move from the role of expert, trainer, or supervisor, to that of collaborator, consultant, or facilitator. No longer merely a transmitter of information, knowledge, and skills, the teacher educator is now involved in a collaborative and interactive relationship.

The differences between the training and development approaches in teacher education can now be summarized.

| Training and Development Perspectives on Teacher Education | | |
|---|---|---|
| | TRAINING | DEVELOPMENT |
| APPROACH | deficiency view | development view |
| | methods based | on-going process |
| | external knowledge | internal knowledge |
| | improvement oriented | awareness oriented |
| | prescriptive | non-prescriptive |
| | atomistic approach | holistic approach |
| | top-down | bottom-up |
| CONTENT | narrow | broad |
| | performance based | values based |
| | skills and techniques | process based |
| | received curriculum | negotiated curriculum |
| PROCESS | modeling | inquiry based |
| | practice | reflective |
| | imitation | action research |
| | short term | long term |
| TEACHER ROLE | technician | knower |
| | apprentice | investigator |
| | passive | active |
| | subordinate | co-participant |
| TEACHER-EDUCATOR ROLE | hero | collaborator |
| | expert | consultant |
| | model | participant |
| | interventionist | facilitator |

## Implementing a teacher development approach

I have argued that a teacher development approach to teacher education represents a more appropriate model than a training perspective because (a) it offers a richer and truer conceptualization of teaching, (b) it represents a more democratic division of student-teacher and teacher educator roles, and (c) it has more valid goals. However, what problems can be expected when we try to implement such an approach? The following are some of the issues that may have to be resolved.

### 1. Developing teacher educators

A fundamental problem is finding faculty who are willing or able to make the move from teacher training to teacher development. Unfortunately, most faculty in university-based graduate TESOL programmes have no training in teacher education and are often unwilling to see it as relevant to their work. They often hold the view that by giving teachers increasingly sophisticated knowledge about language and language learning theory, or by training teachers in quantitative research methods, their abilities as teachers will improve. But as Freeman comments (1989: 29):

> Although applied linguistics, research in second language acquisition, and methodology all contribute to the knowledge on which language teaching is based, they are not, and must not be confused with, language teaching itself. They are, in fact, ancilliary to it, and thus they should not be the primary subject matter of language teacher education.

### 2. Preparing teachers for development

The new roles required of teachers in a development-focussed approach may not be ones which teachers expect, are familiar with, or may feel comfortable with. Some teachers prefer being told what to do and what works best, and are more interested in being taught to use a method than to develop their own resources as teachers. An essential phase in planning a new programme is, hence, in providing teachers with an understanding of the nature and process of teacher education and their role in it, negotiating appropriate goals, and building realistic expectations.

### 3. Building school support

A programme that involves classroom research, collaborative project work, and other school-based initiatives, is dependent upon the good will of colleagues and supervisors for its successful implementation. Does the school see the value of such an approach and provide the necessary support and encouragement? If not, we may be setting out to prepare teachers to carry out a role which their school does not want them to assume. Liason and networking with schools and engaging supervisors and other school personnel in the planning phase of programme development can help address this problem.

### 4. Evaluating programme accomplishments

Because programme goals in teacher development are long-term, ongoing, and often not measurable directly, rather than short-term, measurable and performance based, it is difficult to determine if and when such goals have been attained. Effects may not be immediately apparent, creating an aura of fuzziness and making evaluation difficult to accomplish. Case studies, ethnographic and longitudinal approaches may therefore be needed to help follow the effects of the programme on different dimensions of teacher development.

These limitations should not, however, discourage us from moving second language teacher education into a new and more fruitful phase of its evolution, one which is characterized by less of a reliance on applied linguistics, less of an emphasis on training, and more attention to the nature and process of teaching and to teacher self-development and continuing growth. Too many teachers leave second language teacher education programmes either bursting with inapplicable theory or with a bag of tricks that offers only partial solutions to the complex issues they confront in the real world. We must do better. The challenge for us in teacher education is to equip teachers with the conceptual and analytical tools they need to move beyond the level of skilled technicians and to become mature language teaching professionals.

## The Author

Jack Richards is a New Zealander who has worked in many parts of the world, including Canada, Indonesia, Singapore, and the United States. He is presently Head of the Department of English at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, where he directs a large EAP programme and In-service teacher education program for Hong Kong English teachers. His primary interests are teacher education, curriculum and material design, and methodology. His classroom ESL experience includes teaching primary school, college students, and adults.

Jack Richards has written over 100 articles and books. Among his academic books are: *Error Analysis* (Longman 1974), *The Context of Language Teaching* (Cambridge UP 1985)—which won the Kenneth Mildenberger Award from the Modern Language Association, *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (Longman 1986), and *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (with T. Rodgers: Cambridge 1986).

He has just completed a new book called *The Language Teaching Matrix*, to be published by Cambridge, and has edited a book on teacher education, with David Nunan, also being published by Cambridge. He has also written many ESL textbooks, including *Breakthrough* (Oxford 1984), *Person to Person* (Oxford 1984), *As I was Saying* (Addison Wesley 1987), and *Listen for It* (Oxford 1987).

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