

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, in a world where English is used almost in every field because of the communicative importance it represents, teachers in all educational institutions mainly in secondary schools have to move forward toward a more developed and updated teaching process.

As a matter of fact, we believe that the environmental changes, particularly in teaching and learning, need the very appropriate strategies and long terms planning. This is why it is very important for teachers of the secondary schools to adopt fundamental rules and styles that will form the required strategies which will comply with the accelerating needs of today's world. This will cement and foster the competition of the global environment of an effective teaching/ learning process.

Consequently, professionals need to acquire certain strategic discourse with an eye to teach English more effectively and purposefully since developing teaching and teachers is based on constantly refreshing and adopting new techniques that suit best the demands of the learners and the world.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

We know that the teacher's professional development plays an essential role in a successful educational reform. High quality professional development refers to rigorous and relevant content strategies and organizational support that will ensure long-term teacher development. However, all along our teaching experience in a secondary school we have noticed that teaching as a profession and teachers of EFL in secondary schools of the targeted location have remained almost peripheral to the used strategies and methods of more than a past decade, and that the techniques to improve the teaching process have been restricted to seminars that chewed the same ideas.

### **2. Aim of the paper**

Through this research paper, we aim at:

- Setting better connections with technology literacy;
- Emphasizing the need for a long-term commitment to training, not only through formal methods such as conferences or seminars, but informally as well, for instance using internet for electronic learning sessions which we hope can be delivered on an ongoing basis in institutions, or in other public places or even at home and
- Capturing and transmitting to the cohort of teachers' expertise, and figuring out a way to encourage information sharing.

### **3- Basic Assumptions**

Throughout the present study, we will be assuming that:

- Teachers' self-reflection and self-assessment are indeed key factors to ensure effective and successful teaching/learning processes,
- Teachers become more aware about their teaching weaknesses and strengths when they engage in the process and project of electronic teaching portfolios implementation,

· Teachers will, as they perceive it, be able to react to new acquired experiences through this device and thus, develop their objectives in the directions that help them evolve and meet their learners' needs, and

· Teachers' involvement in the project is not only a major aspect of teachers' expertise but a collaborative endeavour through which they will be able to determine how to implement changes into the professional teaching as well.

## **I. Theoretical Background**

According to Teresa Pica, (1985), teaching language learners is also carrying out research on language learning. They both share common concerns. As language teachers and advocating the term research, we would rather refer to a type of reflecting constant personal and practical inquiries which are informed by their own belief systems as they continuously analyze the teaching practice, their students' progress too. They not only plan classroom activities and organize course content but they tend to teach through appropriate techniques and strategies to meet their students' needs as well.

Based on Swales', (1988) claim, Dudley Evans, (1998) describes language teachers as needing to perform five different roles which are: 1)- teacher, 2)- collaborator, 3)- course designer and material provider, 4)- researcher, and 5)- evaluator. The author suggests that in order that language teachers meet their learners' needs and adopt the methodology and activities of the target objective, they must first work in close collaboration with one another, a fact that has been emphasized by Orr, (1995) and who has declared that "collaboration does not have to end at the development stage but rather, it can extend as far as the teaching process occurs."

If we agree with these statements, we will surely share the concept that there should be one ultimate alternative which is to develop the teaching process and teachers as professionals and practitioners of the target language. Therefore, we are quite confident that the delivery of teachers development based on finding out adequate and appropriate new techniques to undertake their teaching task is the key to progress and thus to success, and that learning to teach is a process of a constant and continuous production whose grounding is to supply it with good raw materials and a solid design in short and long term programs. Gina Abu Fadel, July 5<sup>th</sup>, (2003: 91), states: « *L'enseignement est sans doute l'un des terrains d'expérience les plus fertiles pour celui qui se donne pour objectif de réfléchir sur la pratique.* »

In that sense Rebecca Smoak, (2003: 27), states that teaching is a real challenge in itself and it offers virtually unlimited opportunities for professional growth which is why we must be prepared to find out how language is used in real world situations and how to teach this language. She adds that knowledge of discourse and genre analysis is crucial for every teacher and that we must be ready to develop courses that teach authentic language from many different fields, based on accurate needs analysis and appropriate materials and methodologies. Marjorie Rosenberg, (2004) expresses the urgent need for professional development stating:

*Our students deserve the best we can give them and that includes a relaxed but energetic and lively atmosphere in the classroom, creating a community to which both learners and teachers are eager to belong.*

Marjorie Rosenberg, 2004: 34

On this perspective, many researchers have chosen to speak about teaching education and most of the time this refers to teacher learning for instance, Strevens, (1976); Spolsky, (1978); Kaplan,

(1980), and Larsen-Freeman, (1990). Nevertheless, a great deal of work towards developing teaching and teachers remains to be done.

Jack C. Richards, (1998: xiv), "*Beyond Training*" book examines the nature of second language teacher development and how teacher's practices are influenced by their beliefs and principles. In the preface of the book, the author says that this is the primary focus of teacher preparation toward an orientation that seeks a more holistic approach to teacher development built on the notion of the teacher as critical and reflective thinker and that teaching can be defined in terms of a given set of effective teaching, and that their application is enough to produce good Second/Foreign language teaching. He puts it:

*Such competencies, or skills are often identified with procedural and managerial aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning, rules and routines for classroom management, strategies for setting up grouping and seating arrangements, ways of opening and closing lessons, techniques for effective questioning, eliciting, and giving feedback.*

Jack C. Richards, 1998: xiv

So, teacher education towards development needs, according to the author, to engage teachers not only in the mastery practice rules but in an exploration of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and thinking that uniform such practice. We consequently agree that this is a long-term process but it is achievable through ongoing dialogue and contact with colleagues in order to acquire more experience in the field. Marland, 1995: 131, mentions:

*...Rather, the classroom actions of teachers are guided by internal frames of references which are deeply rooted in personal experiences especially in-school ones, and are based on interpretations of those experiences.*

At this level and as teachers develop their skills, awareness and knowledge, they move from the level of technical rationality as stated by Putorak, (1993), where the stress is on mastery of basic teaching techniques and skills, to a level of critical reflection where teaching is guided by the teacher's personal theory and philosophy of teaching, and is constantly renewed by critical reflection and self-assessment.

Seeking information about preconceived notions of the professional development, David Nunan and Clarice Lamb, "*The Self-Directed Teacher*", (1996: 55), give more importance to collaboration with colleagues under planning and staff meetings because they believe that the professional growth embedded in the potential of collegial collaboration presents "*an essential strand in the fabric of any educational institution.*" They add that this can be enhanced if procedures such as managing the meeting, contributing to the agenda of the meeting and affording a regularly scheduled time with a degree of sensitivity are adhered to. Rebecca Smoak, (2003) emphasizes this idea saying:

*Naturally, to prepare ourselves (teachers/practitioners) to do all of this, we must take advantage of training and professional development opportunities, and we should rely on the expertise of more experienced colleagues.*

Rebecca Smoak, 2003: 27

Furthermore, there exists in the EFL/ESL situation a real need for the continuing professional development. Therefore, in order to meet the demands of the profession, we must create awareness that continuing professional development is deemed to be the systematic maintenance, improvement, and widening knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for the

function of professional and technical duties. This development as underlied by Marks, (1990: 8), will aim at updating the teacher with knowledge about the field as well as refining his/her skills in using procedures and exploiting materials.

The teacher should be more aware of his/her role as a facilitator of the process of teaching and learning, of choice made in the domains of methodology, material, interaction; enabling self-propelled and self—monitored further development. Teacher development is thus a continuous process encompassing pre-service preparation, induction into the teaching profession and in-service activities. This might be conducted by teacher-educators (known in Algeria as Inspectors), personnel from the Ministry of education, and professional as English language teacher (known as the English subject responsible: *responsable de matière*) as a community and as a learning resource for the individual teacher.

In a more recent research, compared to Marks', Pennington, (1995: 706), says that teacher change and development require an awareness of a need to change. She defines this development as “*a metastable system of context-interactive change involving a continual cycle of innovative behaviour and adjustment to circumstances.*” This development, as also seen by Jack C. Richards, (1990: 5), is based on two key components: innovation and critical reflection. In an interview with Farrell, (1995), J.C. Richards says:

*Critical reflection refers to an activity or process in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated; usually in relation to a broad purpose. It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action.*

Farrel, 1995:

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Consequently, Farrell, (1996), suggests five core components of a teacher development model which are not isolated but are all connected. These are:

1. Provide different opportunities for teachers to reflect through a range of different activities such as
  - Group discussions: it can simply be a group of teachers for regular meetings
  - Observation: self-observation, in pairs,
  - Journal writing: in a form of a diary, alone or in pairs (Brock et al. 1992, “*Journaling Together*”).
  - Critical friends: Francis, (1995: 234), says that critical friends can “stimulate, clarify, and extend thinking...and feel accountable for their own growth and their peers’ growth”.
2. Build in some ground rules to the process and into each activity
3. Make provisions for four different kinds of time:
  - Individual: for self-professional development
  - Activity: time spent on each activity providing more dialogue, and observation

- Development: Elbaz, (1998: 173), says that “teachers have a common concern to reduce the complexity of the situation, to accept neat and obvious accounts of the causes of the problems.”
- Period reflection: to put in mind that “we have an end insight”

4. External input: Ur, (1993: 20-22), says:

*Reflection emphasizes personal experiences and promotes a relative neglect of external input, this is why teacher education requires input from vicarious experiences, other people’s observations and reflection...and from other people’s experiments, and from theories learnt from research and literature.*

5. A low affective state: for in-depth reflection to occur which is not automatic; anxiety is present. Therefore, a non-threatening environment should be fostered in the group by the individuals themselves. As the objective is traced, Lange, (1990: 240-250), says, “*It begins the developing teacher’s path toward becoming an expert teacher.*”

Freeman, (1982), saw that professional development was through developing knowledge, skills and habits in teachers and these almost always included the use of self-assessment, peer learning and positive attitudes. With a coordination of English language teachers’ professional development, Liz England, (1998: 20-23), suggests three steps identifying the changes needed:

- Pre-service teacher education: based on pre-service programs, the aim is to prepare teachers with a variety of techniques and strategies to be fully involved into their profession,
- In-service teacher education and accountability: this is related to an in-service training program to develop teacher’s skills and provide the environment for teachers to gain an identity as individual professionals,
- Developing an in-service training program: this should include opportunities for learning and for sharing ideas on one’s own, with colleagues and with a supervisor. It should contain a core of self-requirements, elements of self-assessment, chances for brainstorming, planning and identifying ways of meeting the needs of a specific student, or a group of students, and building on individual teacher strengths.

By viewing professional development as a coordinated effort and a life-long process extending throughout one’s career, we thoroughly agree that providing the teachers as professionals with the necessary support for positive efforts is an urgent condition. To reinforce this idea, Christopher N. Candlin and Henry Widdowson in Tony Wright’s book “*Roles of Teachers and Learners*” (n.d: 3), state:

*We believe that advances in language teaching stress from the independent efforts of teachers in their own classrooms. This independence is not brought about by imposing fixed ideas and promoting fashionable formulas. It can only occur where teachers, individually or collectively explore principles and experiment with techniques.*

In addition to this, the real world communication problems of the twenty first century are already on our shoulders. We obviously admit that successful international communication will become more critical than ever and that “Global” matters and difficult problems will be addressed more effectively by people who can speak and write clearly to one another. More, this communication, either we want it or not, will actually take place in English, and this is why it is advisable that teachers become more

critical in performing their role and delivering courses being forcefully equipped with the necessary skills to encounter these challenges. For this reason, Watanabe, (2004: 132), states:

*...Now in response to the need for international communication, there is a greater emphasis on active language, involving the exchange of both spoken and written information.*

This reality leads us to gather the different propositions and positions that concern the continuing professional development and suggest a new technique that goes along with the objectives traced which consist in encouraging self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. We also aim through this technique to reinforce the ideas of keeping journals, concerting colleagues, sharing and discussing new points of view, but in a very updated material; we then say "Teaching Portfolios" which will be electronically framed; simply: "E-Teaching Portfolios".

## **II- Electronic- Teaching Portfolios in Professional Development.**

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the use of electronic materials in the ELT field. Admittedly, technology is continuously changing the way we get to prepare our lessons in order to be able to employ the most effective teaching and learning strategies for more progress. In fact, we are no more allowed to go backward; we have to cope with the tremendous changes that are moulding our world, and accepting these new technologies and doing with in our professional life is a "must do" because as Gerard Koster, (1994: 47), said, "*Nothing is as old as yesterday's newspaper.*" Furthermore, we also believe that the need for more flexibility and freedom in the teaching/learning process has encouraged the digital revolution to be constantly present; if not part of the educational system as it provides an entrée to libraries, research institutions, databases, and myriad other sources of data. As Brown, (1994) has stated: "*The era of methods is over*", and Woodward, (1996), noted that the profession (teaching) is now in a period of "*post-method thinking.*"

We therefore recognise that the electronic transfer of information in the teaching/learning process is so important as it leads to success and progress, and that it is global without any boundaries in order to create chances for cultural and linguistic exchanges impacting on language education and our roles as language teachers.

### **II- 1. Teaching Portfolios**

Educational portfolios, according to Bergman, (1994); Pintrich et al. (1993), are used worldwide because they not only teach to think critically, but encourage also active, independent and self-regulated learners. They have become popular in the educational community because of the different needs expressed either by the teachers or by the learners.

### **II- 2. Definitions of Teaching Portfolios**

A large proportion of the current literature is today available concerning educational portfolios in general and teaching portfolios in particular, although there is no main difference between these two. We would rather accept the fact that teachers in the professional developing phase are simply learners. Therefore, teaching portfolios are a creative form of summarizing and developing stronger teaching. They are as parallel to the more familiar process of presenting one's research achievements, documenting and sharing scholarly activities. They might be seen as an extension of one's curriculum vitae whose reflective and communal activities are a form of personal growth. Frederick

and Shaw, (1996: 3), define portfolios as: “*Purposeful collections of student work that exhibit to the student (and/or others) the student’s efforts, progress or achievement in (a) given area(s).*”

Through this definition, we openly understand that portfolios are a powerful tool used to demonstrate learning and progress. Arter and Spandel, (1992:36), believe that a portfolio is: “*A purposeful collection of student’s work that tells the story of the student’s efforts, progress and achievement in a given area.*”

Also, Paulson and Meyer, (1991); Adam and Hamm, (1992: 105), have all traced the same conclusion concerning what a portfolio is since the general consensus among educators is that effective professional development is extremely valuable for teachers as pointed at by Adgers, (1999), and that school improvement is dependent upon professional development as underlied by Darling Hammond and Mc Laughlin, (1995). According to Retallick and Groundwater Smith, (1996: 13), a teaching portfolio is:

*...A compilation of evidence which demonstrates the acquisition, development and exercise of knowledge and skills in relation to...work practices. It offers information and interpretation about a practitioner’s philosophy, plans, methods and the students learning outcomes they produce.*

In essence, it a reflective piece that shows the characteristics of effective teaching practice, and highlights evidences of how the teacher has demonstrated learning, skills and understandings.

### **II- 3. Teaching Portfolios: Profile and Components**

Fundamentally, teaching portfolios should present a sampling of the breadth, depth and quality of one’s work in order to convey one’s abilities, strengths or style and achievements because as defined, these tools can be multi-purposed. They can have a form of summative evaluation as they address an administrative need to summarize one’s teaching contribution in a teaching institution. They can also have a formative evaluation if used for self-reflection and growth. More important, not taking these tools as simple folders, the teaching portfolios must be built on some principles which are as follows: