

**Excerpts and summarized topics from Bell B. & Gilbert J. (1996),  
Teacher Development, Falmer Press, London.**

Best teachers want the best for their students. They want their students to have the best opportunities and the best outcomes. This implies that they improve their teaching skills, their knowledge about the subjects they teach, their students and their relationships with them.

The centrality of the child as a main principle of education implies that the learning expected of each student is closely related to their individual current skills, prior experiences, knowledge, interests, concerns and values. The principle, in sum, implies that teachers are aware of and able to manage with students' physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural different circumstances.

As any other training process, teacher training is a complex and heavy process of parallel development in one's personal, professional and social. Teacher development has to be thought of as human development, a major aspect of which is the development of self-identity (Lave 1995): teachers have to develop a sense of themselves as teachers. In so doing, teachers have to work in a dialectically connected way inwards, to get insight of their capacities, their limits, their desires and fears, and outwards, to understand the social forces that condition their work in the surrounding world.

In so doing they have to get awareness of the individualistic view dominating our western culture, which assigns value to self-direction, self-reliance, individual autonomy, rights and responsibilities, rather than to families, interpersonal relationship networks, organizations, States. Both cognition and action are socially produced, they are not the result of information processing but systems of ideas, norms, motivations, values, which are constructed and legitimated at the social level.

Motivation can derive from the teachers' will to help at best all their students, and especially those from social groups who seem to be underachieving, and from awareness of their own limits and desire to improve as professionals and as educators.

**Teacher development: the social, personal and professional model**

Social development involves the renegotiation and reconstruction of the rules and norms of what it means to be a teacher; the development of ways of working with others that enable the kinds of social interaction necessary for renegotiating and reconstructing of what it means to be a teacher.

Personal development involves each individual teacher constructing, evaluating and accepting or rejecting for herself or himself the new socially constructed knowledge about what it means to be a teacher, and managing the feelings associated with changing their activities and beliefs about education, particularly when they go against the current or proposed socially constructed and accepted knowledge.

Professional development involves not only the use of new teaching activities in the classroom but also the development of the beliefs and conceptions underlying their actions, including the core values and commitment that are central to the development of new moral frameworks in education.

In the model, teacher development is viewed as learning by teachers. Learning is conceptualised from a social constructivist perspective, as occurring within the contexts of the classroom and the wider social, political, economic and historical contexts of our societies; as constructed and reconstructed by people, both personally and socially; it includes the development of a self-identity as a teacher; it involves the teachers' knowing about and monitoring the change process.

In the model, teacher development is viewed as one of empowerment for ongoing development, rather than one of continued dependency on a facilitator's or others' suggestions for change. To this goal, teachers have to: contribute to the teacher development process and program; feel that their contributions are valued, for example, that their opinions, ideas, teaching activities, suggestions in decisionmaking, and initiatives are worthwhile; experience competence in teaching; have a sense of control over the nature of their development; address their concerns and needs; view themselves as learners; become innovative and creative, rather than only implement given strategies; feel that changes are possible and beneficial in the current school and political situation.

The social, personal and professional model of teacher development raises challenges for teachers, teacher educators, school managers and policy makers. A major challenge is to promote the renegotiation and reconstruction of current and often long lasting and widely shared beliefs about what it means to be a teacher.

Forums for teachers can be useful to share anecdotes and experiences, but also spaces in scientific conferences and journals have to be opened to the voices of teachers as ultimately responsible for their activities and their formation. Forums should be supported and funded, rather than being used manipulatively or at least authoritatively by governments.

**Methods:**

- a) Teachers share, through the use of anecdotes, the new teaching activities they had been trying out in their classrooms.
- b) They derive from those sessions some shared theoretical principles about their work.
- c) They analyse, with the intervention of experts, the relationships between those principles and their concrete classroom work, and the factors that produce the perceived inconsistencies between theories and practices.