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## **Teacher Development in the Postmethod Era: Empowering Educators As Transformative**

### **Intellectuals**

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### **Abstract**

Postmethod condition, which emerged as an alternative to the method, advocates a more flexible context-sensitive approach to education. Generally, traditional professional development programmes are method-based or aim to provide technical training. It is often a tailor-made approach that overlooks the complexities of real classrooms and fails to focus on the professional agency of teachers. The present article discusses how postmethod pedagogy, based on the three parameters of possibility, practicality, and particularity (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, a), helps teachers to become transformative intellectuals or agents of change rather than mere passive technicians. By critiquing conventional teacher development models, the article focuses on flexible professional development processes that revolve around reflective practice, action research, and collaborative inquiry. By mentioning the barriers, the paper suggests some strategies like integrating reflective practice into daily routines, facilitating action research projects, developing communities of practice, customising teacher development programs using technology, and embedding critical pedagogy and social justice themes for implementation of postmethod teacher development.

*Keywords: Teacher development, postmethod pedagogy, reflective practitioners, action research, role of the teacher*

## **Introduction**

For many years, the concept of a teacher was mainly based on their teaching of a syllabus and curriculum. In ancient times, for idealists, the role of a teacher was a guide and philosopher. Later, it was changed into a friend, philosopher, and guide, with the introduction of realism. Naturalist and pragmatic philosophers consider teachers as stage setters for learning. In postmethod condition, teachers act as transformative intellectuals rather than information-givers through different methods. But do traditional teacher development programmes, which provide a one-size-fits-all formula to all, offer solutions to the social, cultural, and political aspects of all learning environments? The present article attempts to answer this question and suggest some strategies for flexible professional development processes that revolve around reflective practice, action research, and collaborative methods, embedded in postmethod pedagogy.

## **Postmethod Condition**

The trajectory of the method of English language teaching ranges from the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, the TPR, Suggestopedia, and the Silent Way to Communicative Language Teaching. But these methods never provide an absolute solution for the diverse and dynamic realities of the classrooms in different parts of the world. Often, teachers adopt these methods with little regard for the learners' needs, institutional challenges, and social and cultural milieu. Therefore, juxtaposing the concept of method, Kumaravivelu (2006, a) invented the Postmethod condition.

In the postmethod condition of B. Kumaravadivelu (2006, a), an innovative, adaptable, and teacher-led framework is preferred over method-based learning frameworks. There are three parameters at the bottom of the postmethod condition, like particularity, possibility, and practicality. Of these, particularity refers to the uniqueness of the context. Here, teaching strategies will be grounded in particular socio-cultural and sociopolitical conditions of learners. Practicality entails teachers generating their own theories from their knowledge and classroom experiences, in lieu of implementing external theories. Possibility ensures that teachers can identify and address the social inequalities, identities, and empowerment both outside and inside the classroom. The teacher acts as a central figure in the decision-making process of creative pedagogy; therefore, in engaging with theory critically, adapting to context, and advocating for social justice through education.

### **Reconceptualising the Function of the Teacher**

For several years, language teachers have functioned as passive technicians who hand over the content through predetermined methodologies. As Giroux asserts, teachers are transformative intellectuals, reflective and empowered agents who can generate a pedagogy that suits the complex demands of their local context (1998). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, a), the process of transformative teaching demands that teachers take a critical outlook at the dichotomy between theory and practice, between theorists and practitioners. The reconceptualization of the role of the teachers threatens the traditional training model, which highlights methods and procedural knowledge over critical reflection, contextual awareness, and professional autonomy.

According to critical pedagogists like Henry Giroux (1998), Peter McLaren (1995), Alastair Pennycook (2001), and Sarah Banesch (2001), a pedagogy embedded in relations of power and dominance is used to create and sustain social inequalities. As McLaren (1995) asserts, they considered educational institutions as “cultural arenas where heterogeneous, ideological, discursive and social forms collide in an unremittent struggle for dominance”. So, a pedagogy based on the lived experiences of learners and teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, c) is the need of the hour.

Postmethod pedagogy emphasizes the agency of teachers- the ability to make informed decisions, adapt novel practices, and construct knowledge through their continuous interaction with the teaching environment. This idea of agency emerged from the parameter on practicality of postmethod pedagogy, which acknowledges that meaningful pedagogical knowledge often generates from their own classroom experiences rather than from external theories. The parameter of possibility regards teachers as advocates for social change. Here, teachers reflect on how teaching the English language cuts through issues such as identity, equity, and power. From this perspective, language teaching transforms into a political endeavor that can either reproduce or challenge dominant social structures.

### **Teacher Training to Teacher Development**

Reconceptualization of the teachers’ role as transformative intellectuals and agents of change demands a dialogic, dynamic, reflective, and context-sensitive approach that values the lived experiences of educators over centralized and top-down models of professional teacher training. The focus of the teacher development programmes should be on teachers' experience, reflections, and evolving knowledge. Conventional models of teacher training offer the delivery

of fixed methods, principles, and techniques, which are inadequate in postmethod context. As we all know, any conventional training programme includes a set of goals, objectives, and predetermined procedures. So, the postmethod pedagogy invites programme developers to move from teacher training to teacher development. Teacher development includes critical reflection, local experimentation, and sustained inquiry into practice. It is tied to the parameter of practicality, which encourages the teachers to generate their own pedagogical knowledge from what works best, what does not, and why in specific contexts. Hence, teachers become theorists of their own practice by generating meaningful insights.

### **Reflective Practice and Action Research**

Reflective practice is the central figure in postmethod teacher development. It means the ability to analyse continually on one's own practice and to understand and improve. To inspect their decision-making and adapt to changing classroom dynamics, models such as Schön's (1983) "reflection-in-action", a real-time process of improvising and making quick adjustments during an event, and "reflection-on-action", a retrospective analysis and evaluation that happens after the event is over, allowing for deeper learning and planning for the future, can be employed.

Action research is another tool for teacher development programmes in postmethod conditions. It motivates teachers to investigate classrooms and, if any situation demands a solution, encourages them to act immediately and assess the impact of changes. It persuades teachers to utilize their personal knowledge in new situations by emphasising postmethod principles such as teacher autonomy (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, c). It encourages teachers to function independently by making their own decisions in novel situations, and by focusing on

localized inquiry, they develop context-sensitive teaching practices for specific classroom environments and classroom-oriented theories.

### **Supportive Environment for Teacher Development**

Institutional structures must also evolve drastically to prioritise critical reflection, social control, and identity formation. Restructuring of education programmes is also necessary for creating a supportive environment for teacher development through postmethod pedagogy. Administratives should provide time and space for communities of practice for teachers and consider teachers' experiential knowledge and bottom-up innovations as valuable.

The major differences between traditional and postmethod oriented teacher development programmes are given below in the table.1

**Table 1**

*Traditional vs Postmethod-Oriented Teacher Development*

Aspect	Traditional Model	Postmethod Oriented Model
Teacher's Role	Passive Technicians, Method follower	Reflective practitioners, Transformative Intellectuals
Target of Training	Prescribed Methods and Techniques	Context Specific Knowledge and Inquiry
Source of Knowledge	Professional knowledge and empirical research by experts	Professional Knowledge, Teacher's personal knowledge, and self-

		exploratory research by the teachers
Approach to Development	One Size Fits all/Top Down	Bottom Up, Contextualised, Flexible
Professional Growth	Fine training sessions	Ongoing reflection, practice, and action research
Collaboration	Minimal	Collaborative Communities of Practice
Social political dimension	Usually ignored	Explicitly addressed, critical pedagogy, empowerment, and justice

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### **Strategies for Implementing Postmethod-Oriented Teacher Development**

The following are some suggested strategies for teacher development constructed on the principles of postmethod pedagogy.

- **Integrate Reflective Practice into Daily Routines**

Teaching journals, peer observations, and audio and video recordings of the class help teachers to frame future goals by analysing and identifying the situations and the patterns. The questions in the reflective journal might be: What worked well today and why? How did the learners respond? What would I change next time, and why?

- **Facilitate Action Research Projects**

Action research helps to get an immediate solution to an immediate problem in a classroom situation. Here, the teacher identifies the local classroom issues and investigates them through small-scale action research. It allows teachers to function as transformative individuals who create knowledge rather than being passive consumers of predetermined solutions. For executing action research in classrooms, institutions must not only allocate time within their schedule but also provide space for teachers to learn from other communities and share their knowledge with other officials through various platforms, both online and offline.

- **Develop Communities of Practice**

Communities of Practice, a concept by Wenger (1998), is an informal learning organization in which a group of people with a common concern and interest share their experiences and strategies, construct knowledge together, and build professional identities through different dialogues. In other words, they learn better tactics for next time while interacting regularly. These interactions can be through gatherings of faculty, WhatsApp groups, or local or national teacher communities.

- **Customise Teacher Development Programs**

Conventional teacher training programmes are rigid, method-bound, and are not suitable for teacher development. Teacher development programmes can be customised into context-sensitive workshops that encompass classroom realities and develop practices from the grassroots level. Elements of local languages, cultures, and identities are also to be included in the novel, customized teacher development programmes. It encourages the teacher's ability to make informed decisions, adapt novel practices, and construct knowledge.

- **Use Technology for Critical Engagement**

In this digital era, teachers can utilize digital tools to practice reflective and collaborative teaching. Major useful digital tools include blogging platforms, teaching portfolios, online discussion forums, podcasts, and webinars. The utilisation of technology helps personalised learning and peer support while focusing on areas where learners need improvement.

- **Embed Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice Themes**

Teacher development programmes can be created through critical pedagogy and social justice themes. As Ahsan (2020) points out, learners' ability to think critically about their learning situation, learning, relearning, unlearning, reflection, identity, equity, and power helps generate critical pedagogy. Teachers must undergo training on culturally sustaining pedagogy, decolonizing the curriculum, and understanding race, gender, and language to develop a new critical pedagogy that addresses the socio-political and socio-cultural aspects of society.

### **Challenges in Implementing Postmethod Pedagogy for Teacher Development**

The implementation of effective postmethod pedagogy for teacher development is not relieved by constraints. Several practical, institutional, and ideological barriers hinder its execution in the mainstream of professional education programmes.

- **Institutional Resistance to Change**

The majority of institutions follow a top-down approach to education; therefore, a method-driven paradigm that focuses on standardised curricula, measurable outcomes, and centralised control. And it does not complement the decentralized and context-sensitive ideas of postmethod pedagogy. They prioritize safe test-driven practices over teacher-led

experimentation. As a result, the teachers could not execute reflective and context-driven strategies without the support of their stakeholders.

- **Teacher Preparedness and Confidence**

For the successful implementation of postmethod pedagogy for teacher development, teachers should be responsible, reflect on classroom situations, and possess a high level of autonomy. Lack of training in reflective practice, action research, and critical pedagogy adversely influences teacher preparedness and confidence.

- **Assessment Pressures and Policy Constraints**

In a conventional classroom, teachers are often required to teach to test rather than experiment with meaningful, localized pedagogies. Moreover, standardised testing rules provide rigid expectations contrary to postmethod ideals. The fundamental principles of postmethod pedagogy are usually in variance with the rigorous standards of testing systems. Teachers may employ safe, standard methods to meet the specific requirements of the school.

- **Time and Resource Constraints**

Usually, most of the teachers are in a hurry to complete their syllabus. Activities in post-method development need time, space, and resources, that may be in short supply in conventional educational systems. Teachers often get less time for reflection, introspection, and experimentation in classrooms and are overloaded with both classroom and administrative tasks. To tackle this issue, institutions must play a pivotal role in professional development.

- **Ideological and Cultural Misalignment**

The emphasis on empowerment, identity, and social justice in postmethod pedagogy might conflict with mainstream concepts of education and political considerations in certain circumstances. As a result, teachers are afraid of the consequences of dealing with issues like gender and power dynamics and language differences in the classroom. These problems can be alleviated by implementing postmethod pedagogy gradually with institutional support and a space for discussion.

A drastic change is essential in the traditional system of Teacher education programmes for overcoming these challenges. It can be practiced by investing in the agency of teachers and professionalism and reframing the goals of teacher education programmes. Hence, stakeholders, teacher educators, and policymakers must develop a structure that balances accountability with autonomy and structure with flexibility to modify the aims of teacher education programmes.

### **Conclusion**

Postmethod pedagogy views the teacher at its centre, and the teacher plays a pivotal role in pedagogic decision-making. The teacher development programmes occasionally offer predetermined method-based solutions for the teachers. The article asserts that the teacher development programmes should be a flexible, evolving, reflective, and context-sensitive process that prepares teachers as transformative individuals by utilising their experience, knowledge, and insight. With the support of institutional policies and structures, and through reflection, action research, and collaborative inquiry, transformative teachers can create a locally relevant and globally informative, socially equitable pedagogy. Teacher development initiatives through postmethod pedagogy prepare teachers for a constantly evolving educational environment. In short, through postmethod teacher development programmes, the nation will

have transformative, more reflective, socially responsible teachers who can crack all modern perils.

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