

# R E V I E W S



## THE DEVELOPING TEACHER

Duncan Foord (2009)

Delta Publishing (pp. 96) ISBN, 978-1-905085-22-4

### DT DS The Developing Teacher

Practical activities for professional development



#### 1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the *DELTA Teacher Development Series*, *The Developing Teacher* provides teachers with guidelines for reflection, self-assessment and professional growth. It encourages them, whether experienced or not, to roll up their sleeves and take the answer to the question, 'How do we develop?', further. The book offers a pioneeringly comprehensive, step-by-step approach to teacher development viewed as a practical reflective process based on DIY ('Do It Yourself') activities for analysis and action.

This practical 'kit' of ideas and opportunities for development is designed for teachers who are determined to invest time, effort and reflection in their own growth, and who are ready for a hands-on experience, as well as for schools that would like to support their teachers' professional development.

#### 2. FORMAT

Following the author's argument, the 96-page book is divided into three main parts, each representing a stage of development from theory to practice and from short-term to long-term projects.

*Part A* focuses on the theoretical grounds of teacher development and is organised into short sections, clearly signalled and structured, that expand on the idea of learning and reflection, and challenge the teacher to take a proactive approach to teaching. This chapter also includes the bibliography quoted from or used for reference in the book.

*Part B* describes the *circles of development* in detail, accompanying the readers on a journey of self-discovery journey from needs analysis to techniques and experiments gradually involving their students, colleagues, school and profession. These ready-made activities consist of a rationale, a description of the activity and the steps to follow. In addition, there are 'pro-formas' (grids) for notes on reflection, planning and application, questionnaires and materials to use in class.

*Part C* deals with a higher level of development involving long-term projects, i.e. a teacher's diary, a portfolio and a developmental scheme supported by a variety of ideas, questionnaires and checklists to facilitate planning.

The positive and friendly tone, the relevant examples, metaphors (e.g. 'the shopping list') and personal anecdotes, the accessible format (short sections), and the visual aids (questionnaires, forms, diagrams and easy-to-remember titles) make the book an all-inclusive tool kit for the teacher keen on developing.

#### 3. A COMPREHENSIVE MANUAL

*The Developing Teacher* starts with the definitions of *development* and the models of teacher development in EFL since the 60s, and gradually makes the reader aware of the advantages and shortcomings of each approach, ultimately highlighting the need for explicit action and personalisation.

The *five concentric circles of development* support the idea of taking professional growth to class and giving the teaching environment an active role in a process that both the teacher and the school benefit from. While the first circle focuses on individual action and reflection, the following ones gradually extend the sphere of influence to students, colleagues, school and the profession in general through such activities as learning/teaching experiments, correcting mistakes, recordings, lesson plan exchanges, mentoring, effective meetings, class observation, and communication strategies.

In the modern style of resource books that offer ready-made lessons, *The Developing Teacher* provides a wide range of *short-term activities* accompanied by useful forms and materials that the teacher can use before, during and after class, for preparation or feedback. These activity plans offer a chance to experiment with new ideas and apply daring developmental strategies.

Last but not least, the book provides both teachers and directors of studies with ideas for *long-term development*, putting forward a refreshing view on the challenging teacher's diary and portfolio and giving a wide range of options to see these projects through, and make both the process and the outcome enjoyable.

#### 4. THE UPS AND DOWNS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Opinions on the issue of professional development are divided. Why should the teacher develop and how long is the process? What are the factors involved? Is development a must for experienced teachers?

##### 1. Strengths

Duncan Foord offers a fresh and positive perspective on teacher development as an enriching yet challenging journey to a destination as opposed to simply 'getting somewhere' without a clear destination in mind.

*The Developing Teacher* comes across as a strong and flexible alternative to intensive training courses, as it helps the teacher gain autonomy, while having all the tools at hand. Prioritising, weekly planning, student feedback, dealing with stress and a positive perspective on class observation, as well as practical solutions to

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teaching-related problems are but a few of the strong points of the book.

In addition to supporting the idea of taking a step back after a year's work, it offers the opportunity for prognosis, anticipating problems in class and acting upon students' expectations, thus contributing to the effectiveness of a year's course.

### 2. Challenges

However ambitious this developmental process may seem, the book sets reasonable time limits and gives freedom of choice and decision-making. As with any reflective process, it involves effort and the will to change, which is a good start when a teacher decides to be rather than simply to read *The Developing Teacher*. The process may be time-consuming and involves the support and participation of the reader's colleagues, the DOS or the teachers' team, who need to be willing to take part in the process rather than be imposed on to do so. Another challenge is personalising the teaching objectives, and being organised and consistent in achieving these goals.

While a text such as this can guide a teacher, the true work is the one the individual brings to the text.

### 5. CONCLUSION

In short, *The Developing Teacher* fills a gap in the market of EFL books and addresses an audience of dedicated teachers who want to make a difference in their classes. Its practical ideas, perfect balance of theory and practice, well-organised structure, resourceful activities and gradually increasing degree of challenge make it a must-have for all teachers eager to improve. Shouldn't all teachers dream of being developing teachers?

Reviewed by  
*Amalia Grapa*  
British Council Alcobendas  
amaliagrapa@yahoo.com

*Amalia Grapa is a Trinity TESOL qualified Romanian teacher with 8 years experience teaching English to children, teenagers and adults. Her interests are teacher development, creative writing and drama.*