

Career Experiences of Lifelong Teachers

“Just put things in perspective!”

How many times have we been encouraged to take such action while wishing and wondering if others really understood our changing concerns, experience or emotions as a teacher! Teacher development is a very complex and dynamic process that evolves over many years. In addition to personal factors, organizational interactions with students, colleagues, the environments, and subject matter along with the teaching experiences influence the nature and rate of career-long change and development. Depending upon the theorists you consult in the literature, one will find several teacher development models that attempt to typify common experiences of teachers as they progress through their professional careers.

But, really, why take a look at three career models that do little to help you or me with tomorrow's or next week's teaching and advising roles? Moreover, why spend time learning about what is going to happen with our new teachers? If you recall, your initial teaching experiences were likely unforgettable. If we each be honest with one another, the experiences were rather traumatic! Unfortunately many other entry-level teachers like you, likely left teaching because they were unsatisfied with a variety of aspects of the role! We no longer can afford to lose our best teachers without making an informed effort to support and acculturate them into the education profession.

A primary reason to be aware of career development models for teachers is so that we can initially inform and raise the awareness of entry-level teacher of what they will be experiencing. Some entry-level teachers actually gauge their progress by referring to phases or stages in the models. Other teachers responsible for teacher development also use the models as a resource when creating and staffing professional development activities. Three featured models that may be useful in showing development are the Teacher Career Cycle, a model created and forwarded by Fessler and Christensen in 1992, the Teacher Career Cycle Model developed by Huberman (1989), and the Life Cycle of a Professional Educator by Steffe and Wolfe (1997).