

MENTORING AND TEACHER INDUCTION

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INTRODUCTION This paper will present details of a project on becoming a teacher and preview the direction of future research issues. The 1990 emphasis of this research-in-progress was to conduct a literature review and build up a theoretical overview on teacher education and the relationship between teacher training and induction. The pilot study focused on six main themes which provided a platform for developing a longitudinal and comparative project on mentoring and teacher induction in Newcastle (NSW) and Leicester (UK). The data will be constantly compared and contrasted in order to provide a less parochial perspective on what are international issues. The pilot study suggested the following research priorities apply for 1991: the internship environment; mentoring by senior colleagues; changes to the school cultures; entry motivations, expectations and attitudes. Tangential issues include links between tertiary and primary staff; interactive socialisation; and the link between the internship and a conjoint research project. Thus the key issue for the project during 1991 will be the mentorship of the 'colleague teacher' [CT] over the 'teacher intern' investigated from intern and staff perspectives.

Lovat (1989: 2) reports that there is a worldwide trend which speaks, variously, of 'reflection', 'field research', 'research-based enquiry', 'metacognition', 'critical curriculum theory' and 'action research' in relation to pre-service teacher education. In general terms, this literature encourages the notion of student enquiry, self-reflection and problem-solving accompanying whatever instructional skills the student teacher might take into the practicum context. While the theoretical, foundational and methodological orientations of the research behind this literature vary in significant respects, it forms an umbrella over a common vision of theory and practice coming together at the point of induction. The UN team argues that we are adding to this seminal work by moving that point of induction into the pre-service situation through a long-term practicum internship. Teaching in our rapidly changing social and technological world is a very different task from teaching in the relatively stable past. The internship model should allow teacher education students to develop attitudes and skills receptive to adaptation and change. This will engender a new occupational culture for teaching, one already forming in some Hunter schools (Crump, 1990a, 1990b).

The notion of 'metacognition' challenges the teacher intern to be aware of her/his own learning patterns and to perceive oneself as capable of investigating their future workplace. The notion of 'critical curriculum theory' challenges the intern to analyse her/his clientele and to begin to select and adapt, from then pool of available teaching/learning strategies and models of curriculum design, those which are mostly appropriate to implement school-centred education. 'Action research' encourages the intern to become a problem-solver and to collaborate with colleagues in innovation from the very beginning of their career. The internship model, including as it does an independent research component and the extension of specialist studies, has the potential to make the induction point of the B.Ed. course at the University of Newcastle a powerful instance of 'reflective practice'.

The new B.Ed. is a 4 year degree comprising three years of full-time study, including a four week block of practice teaching experience each year, followed by a fourth year which contains one semester of academic study and one semester of integrated internship and academic study. The internship will provide the first phase of a structured induction program into teaching. The educational philosophy informing the internship model responds to many of the sustainable concerns raised in the principles of the proposed AEC Working Party (1990) 3 + 2 (double degree) national model for teacher education but avoids the logistical problems of a 3 + 2 model in a region like the Hunter. The internship model is also supported in the informed recommendations of the Joint Review of teacher

Education (1986), *Teacher Quality* Schools Council NBEET (1989), the discipline review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science (1989), and *Teacher Education: Directions and Strategies* NSW Ministry of School Education, Youth and Womens Affairs (1990).

The proposal is a collaborative arrangement between the University of Newcastle, the NSW Department of School Education and the NSW Teachers' Federation. It will provide:

- * the first phase of a structured induction program into teaching for fourth year primary student teachers in Hunter region schools;
- * university-based support for newly appointed teachers to Hunter region primary schools;
- * system-based support for planning and conducting the pre-service phase of teacher education, and
- * a collaborative approach to planning and providing continuing professional development to teachers.

The conceptual framework of the internship was developed from research conducted in the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) Program developed at the Research and Development Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Texas, Austin. The RITE program suggests that there is one defining property and seven critical features for effective clinical teacher education programmed. The defining property was that a teacher education program had to be **embedded in a school context**. The seven essential features are: Context-sensitive; Purposeful and articulated; Participatory and collaborative; Knowledge-based; Ongoing; Developmental; and Analytic and reflective. The task of the UN team evaluation will be to determine the appropriateness of these features to the mentor/colleague teacher relationship.

In 1991, up to 26 primary student teachers will participate in a pilot program. No less than 2 student teachers will be placed in any one school and there will be 7 participating schools. During Semester 1, student teachers will be attached to a CT for half a day for 10 weeks and the CT will undertake an Induction inservice. In Semester 2, the intern will attend the school 4 days/week for 15 weeks and the CT will be freed to participate in personal and school-based staff development and other activities associated with teacher education.

FIRST YEAR TEACHERS

Beginning teachers often describe their first year of teaching in a manner ranging from strong feelings of inadequacy to ones identified by Hitz and Roper (1986) as blind panic. Wallace (1990) investigated the nature of the first year experience of the beginning teacher through a core study of two beginning teachers in the Department of School Education (NSW) in a Western Sydney school. This study identified the significant research themes: the first day, the region, classroom management, expectations and demands, professional relationships.

THE RESEARCH SITE

The city of Blacktown, as part of Western Sydney, has a history of dramatic population growth which is unprecedented anywhere else in Australia. In 1954, the City of Blacktown had a population of 31,748 people, in 1961 the population had tripled to 86,295 (3.6% of Sydney's total population). By 1986 the population reached 192,442 people which made up 5.6% of the population of Sydney. Blacktown is characterised by its young population, with 48% of its population under 25 years old (WESTIR).

According to Connell (1982), the public education system, especially in Western Sydney, seems increasingly less able to meet the needs of its clients. Connell suggests the reasons appear to be a combination of cultural and value-based differences in attitudes towards education and its purposes. This situation is reflected in low intellectual attainment, early school leaving, negative attitudes to school, teacher-pupil conflict and truancy.

"MetWest" High School (as we shall refer to the school site) opened in the mid-1970s to relieve the overcrowding in neighbouring schools. The inaugural year saw the initial Year 7 enrolment reach 238 pupils comprising nine classes and served by 20 staff. The school reached its population peak in 1979 when, without a senior school as yet, there were 932 pupils and 62 staff. MetWest High has five major

classroom blocks surrounding an administration building. Buildings are brick veneer construction set on flat bushland. The school site includes tennis courts, basketball courts, a nature trail, an agriculture plot and football fields. Today, MetWest High has over 60 staff and 880 pupils.

Since August 1989 the school has been a Centre of Excellence in the Performing Arts and has many programs which have gained public attention. These include: a Year 7 Behavioural Management Program; gaining the Director General's Achievement Award (1988); and working towards a City of Blacktown Honours Roll to provide models for pupils with low self-esteem.

THE TEACHERS

According to Braithaite (1983), most teachers in Western Sydney are recent graduates from universities. Watson (1990) found that of all the beginning teachers in N.S.W., 67% of first year primary teachers and 48% of first year secondary teachers were teaching in Western Sydney. The majority taught in Western Sydney because they could not obtain more favourable locations or had been sent there by the N.S.W. Department of School education to which they were financially bonded. Watson also found that most of these first year teachers wished to move to other locations in the next appointment. The unwillingness of teachers to work in Western Sydney was traced to an initial fear of the reputation that the area has on the teachers' "grapevine".

In this pilot study we sought a small number of "subjects" to act as instances of contemporary conditions in being a first year teacher within the context of Western Sydney. At MetWest High, two beginning teachers participated, one teaching Music and the other Science. Three experienced senior teachers were also involved in the study, one directly and two informally.

THEMES

The literature search revealed seven main themes which help explain the researched view of beginning teachers: the first day, the school/region, expectations and demands on teaching, classroom management, pupils, colleagues, and parents. These themes are defined in Table A. Table B indicates the research background to these themes. Identifying themes provided a platform for analysis of the data from the pilot study as indicated below.

SCHOOL & REGION

One of the senior teachers introduced MetWest as:

...this school is the "Last Frontier" and it's a great challenge. This school has everything.. incest, drugs, everything. [Field Notes (FN): 29/1/90].

The initial reaction of the participants to MetWest and its surrounding suburbs was generally negative. One commented:

(it is a) physically unattractive area but not as terrible as I imagined or had been led to believe. (There is a) large ethnic element (and) a huge police station at Mt Driutt. [FYTF1: 28/4/90] ²

However, the negativity of these first impressions of the physical and social environment was overruled by positive feelings for the area and its people. The field notes [27/4/90] for one day before the above interview include an observation that FYTM1 "previously thought that MetWest High School was a 'dump' but now loves it. Another senior teacher remarked half way through the year that the:

...western suburbs is a culture shock .. for the schools are fast paced due to many new programs, especially as far as classroom knowledge is concerned. For example, the Staying On program, Careers Market, Disadvantaged Schools Program", Study Skills, Gardening Club... [ST2:21/6/90]

In some Western Sydney schools, due to the high proportion of teachers in their first year joining the staff every year, schools have weekly staff development meetings specifically designed for beginning teachers so that experienced colleagues can offer suggestions and give support.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

On the occasion, classroom activity can go beyond a teacher's control. The worst situation is physical threat from students. Charles (1985) notes that in the Nationwide Opinion Poll (1981) conducted by the National Education Association in the U.S.A., one third of all teachers were sometimes or often afraid of personal attack. Incidents at MetWest suggest this is an Australian phenomenon as well. FYTM2 recounted how:

A Year 10 [16 years old] student was under a lot of stress. This day he pushed another kid off his chair and proceeded to throw a chair at him. I walked up to the offender and stood there. As I stood there he proceeded to pick up another chair and raise it above his head. Standing in front of him I asked him to put the chair down. All the time I was shitting myself inside while calm on the outside. I asked him again "Put the chair down!". This kid is bigger than me. He put the chair down and sat on it, thank god. My bluff worked. If he had not put the chair down there would be nothing else for me to do. While this was happening the other student has pissed off and refused to re-enter the classroom. It seems he is constantly assaulted by his father and, in his own words, "I get hit at home enough. When I come to school I don't want to be hit". This made me sad. [May, 1990].

The other participant, FYTF1, also experienced the threat of personal attack - in the first few weeks in the school! S/he told us that:

In the Isolation Room [where students are isolated from their peers after a period of constant misbehaviour] during (my turn at) supervision, one child threatened me with violence saying he 'knew some people who could fix me up' if I carried out 'that threat'. [The pupil] also expressed some interest in which car I drove with a view to harming it in some way or stealing it. As a single person, living on my own, I decided that I'm in no position to take that kind of risk so I didn't carry out that threat and the kid won! I'd do the same thing again though, for the sake of my safety. [16/2/90]

What these experiences suggest is common ground, or what Crump (1990c) refers to as "touchstone" between the beginning teachers' problem-solution repertoires: in the event of confrontation over their assumed privileged professional authority, and under direct threat of personal attack, FYTF1 and FYTM1 chose a short term solution in order to maintain their personal dignity and a learning environment ordered around the central control of the teacher. Perhaps this was the only real option open to first year teachers who, at the base of a stratified organisational system and just above the pupils themselves, are unable to substantially alter the structures of the school through implementing, for example, a negotiated curriculum, to achieve a longer term solution.

In addition to the major incidents, the main classroom management problems were cited as day-to-day material, innocuous behaviours in comparison to the above: pupils talking without permission, day dreaming, wandering around the room or otherwise not doing what the beginning teachers had directed the pupils to do. One example was provided by FYTM1:

The only discipline problem I seem to wrestle with is the constant comments and questions from kids all through my lessons, and think they have the perfect right to make. Personally, I find this means that they run the lesson instead of the teacher. [9/2/90].

This assumption suggests poor preservice education. Crump (1990c) questions the need for teachers to 'run the lesson' and suggests that the gap between the teacher and pupils can be reduced by "diffusing the issue of control, power and status in the classroom" (p.38) through, for example, the use of a broader curriculum. In school-based courses, Crump reported a more open role for the students to suggest their personal interests as valid knowledge. Crump also demonstrated how the same process can occur in Board-determined - traditional - subjects, a point not well understood by the conservative forces in the N.S.W. educational bureaucracy. If beginning teachers have been prepared to value pupil participation, shared decision-making, negotiated classroom management and the pupils' existing knowledge, as against exclusivist, authoritarian, hierarchical and disproportionately-distributed educational provision/outcomes, then the nature of the classroom management problems depicted above will change - and schools will become educational rather than institutional.

REFLECTIONS

Methods of preparing teachers need adjustment if we are to improve the quality of education. The central issue is whether these adjustments are instrumentalist or emancipatory. Reports on teacher education throughout the 1980s concentrated on altering degree requirements, other structural changes and seeking ways to turn teaching into a profession. Reviews of the content of teacher education tended to look at how teachers learn to teach, the nature of that learning and how it is influenced by the context in which teachers work. Calderhead (1988) notes how this led to various recommendations for the improvement of pre-service training courses, the establishment of new accreditation procedures for the evaluation of courses, more detailed monitoring of teacher education and the prescription of good practice. However, higher entry requirements, increased course length, increased time on subject speciality and extended practicum - by themselves - are not the answer.

As we enter the 1990s, politicians and senior bureaucrats are questioning the appropriateness of higher education as a means towards teacher education. Current reports strongly challenge the relevance of Educational Psychology, Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education (where taught), Comparative Education, History of Education, Research Methodology courses - just about any content area suggesting academic and/or theoretical study. While we acknowledge that many of these disciplines have markedly failed to connect theory and practice and have conducted research for decades on issues completely alien to teachers, and that student teachers learn many of these disciplines imperfectly, that should not mean the wholesale abandonment of what should be the foundation of effective teacher education and induction.

We suspect that unless teacher education provides students with sound theoretical foundations, linked to curriculum theory through classroom practice in a way that the students are able to critically reflect on what it means to be a teacher, and supports this training by providing skills which enable teachers to research their own practice, then we are unlikely to address the real and perceived problems the plethora of recent reports identify. Our research into teacher interns during 1991 will allow us to test that suspicion through the perspectives of both teacher and student teacher cultures.

- 1) Assisted by Bernadette Duggan
- 2) Key: FYT = identifying code; F1 = code for this teacher; followed by date of the interview].

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TABLE A

RESEARCH THEMES

The First Day	The beginning of a teaching career, which includes recent events leading up to this day.
The School/Region	The beginning teachers' opinions of the school, the region and the people of the first teaching appointment and future association with the community.
Expectations and Demands of Teaching	The expectations first year teachers have on themselves and colleagues, including the physical and mental demands of teaching.
Classroom Management	The beginner's definition of the teaching role and its authority. Recording behavioural concerns or confrontations and experimentation of classroom management models.
The Pupils	Includes the first year teacher relationship with students, the general nature of the students, their academic ability, their attitude towards school, and the appropriateness of the curriculum to these students.
The Colleagues	The advantages and disadvantages of the colleague's role in the life of a first year teachers, including the relationship of colleagues with the students, school, and inductees.
The Parents	The first year teacher' encounters and relationship with the parents of their students.

TABLE B

RESEARCH THEMES & LITERATURE

REVIEW THEMES

RESEARCH THEMES	LITERATURE REVIEW THEMES
The First Day	The First Day - Hitz (1986), Ryan (1980).
The School/Region	
Expectations and Demands of Teaching	Expectations and Demands of Teaching - Watson (1990), Ryan (1980), O'Rourke (1983), Battersby & Cocklin (1989), Dropkin & Taylor (1963), Collins (1969), Bluestein (1985), Murdoch (1978), Doyle (1975), Waller (1932).
Classroom Management	Classroom Management - Dropkin & Taylor (1963), Bluestein (1985), Doyle (1975), Murdoch (1978), Crawford (1971), O'Rourke (1983) Emmer (1986).
The Pupils	
The Colleagues	The Colleagues - Hitz (1986), Watson (1990), Bluestein (1985), Wildman (1989), Met-West Induction Program (1987), Hurling-Austin (1987), Little (1982), Bullough (1989), Lortie (1966), Battersby (1990), Battersby & Koh (1980).
The Parents	The Parents - Hitz (1986).