

IV. THE TEACHER EDUCATOR

Most teacher educators acquire any specialist skills that they require incidentally, as they practise their profession. In common with all educational practitioners above the primary level, professional training for teacher educators has been regarded as unnecessary until quite recently. The assumption has been that the competent practitioner will necessarily be a competent teacher of those skills which he himself possesses. The post-graduate year of professional training now required for new entrants to the teaching profession is considered in many countries as a period of welcome relaxation after the degree course. The staff of these education courses do not always receive the same respect as other academics; for many people education is a peripheral discipline, its rigour and respectability brought into question at least in part because so few post-graduate students are deemed to have failed their course. Such is the influence of tradition that academic respectability tends to be correlated with a high failure rate.

The problems are many. In the developing countries there is not infrequently a critical shortage of teacher educators, an inadequate pool of suitably qualified people on whom to draw, no specialised induction training for new teacher educators and insufficient professional or financial returns to keep them in this field of work. The relationship between teacher educators and practising teachers is not always one of mutual respect. The difficulty of quantifying the results of a teacher educator's work means that it is not possible to pronounce categorically on the effectiveness of his teaching. It is often felt that the best teachers are produced by the best colleges, but this may be due at least in part to the best colleges attracting the highest quality of student.

Teacher Educators

Teacher educators, especially in the more developed countries, are often recruited from among successful and experienced teachers. Like head teachers, it is assumed that because they have operated successfully at one level they are likely to operate with equal success at a different level in different circumstances. Not all teacher educators are to be found in colleges and universities, nor do all those who function as teacher educators in whole or in part see themselves in this light. In addition to the principals and staffs of colleges and departments in universities and elsewhere, teacher education functions are carried out by a range of other agents: inspectors and advisers; in-service training specialists; the producers of programme material used in teacher education; trainers of teachers for adults, extension services, literacy campaigns and non-formal education; and more experienced teachers giving informal advice.

Selection of teacher educators

The criteria for selection of teacher educators are confused and sometimes contradictory because the purpose in view is often multiple. Substantial formal academic qualifications are often required; while in some cases this may be justified, in others it reflects the institution's need to establish its academic standing or the arbitrary rulings regarding appointments made by the controlling institution. Frequently, extensive teaching experience is expected, even though this may have been acquired at a different

level and in different circumstances than those for which the students are to be prepared; professional experience, too, may be extensive in time but limited in scope. Useful work could usefully be undertaken with regard to methods of selection of teacher educators with a view to building up a set of criteria upon which selection might be based.

Some suggested criteria have been formulated. Teacher educators, it is suggested, should exemplify the qualities they hope to produce in their students; they must be capable themselves of individual professional growth; they should be trained and experienced teachers. Whether or not specific academic qualifications should be specified must be a matter for local decision; in all cases, however, the interpretation of arbitrary requirements should be flexible. While principals and heads of faculties can reasonably expect to be involved in the appointment of staff, the danger should be recognised and averted of staffs being recruited only from among applicants whose views approximate to those of the principal. The methods of selection of principals themselves could usefully be reviewed, as could the prevalent system of relating the principal's salary to the number of students in his care; too often does this lead to less suitable junior persons being given responsibility for establishing and developing new institutions, an operation which to be effective requires extensive experience.

Training of teacher educators

For limited resources to be used to the best effect, training and guidance are necessary and it appears indisputable that all teacher educators should be prepared for their work and given ongoing support throughout their careers. Not all teacher educators, however, will require the same type or length of initial training, especially where effective systems of in-service provision are available for teachers and teacher educators. The nature of the induction course for the teacher educator differs from that for the new teacher. For the teacher induction normally follows upon a structured preparatory course; for the teacher educator it usually takes the place of extended preparation. While extended courses may be possible, an orientation course of perhaps, two months of initial training is likely to prove most practicable, to be supplemented by later in-service opportunities.

Initial training may be organised in special institutions, within existing institutions, or 'on the job', depending on the facilities available and the numbers involved. In some developing countries teacher educator training courses are offered by universities and other tertiary level institutions: the production of illustrative material relating to these courses could be of practical value to other countries seeking to develop their own facilities.

Content and methodology

The question of content and method raises a number of difficulties, in that no satisfactory guide exists as to the kind of training which should be provided for teacher educators, nor has a taxonomy been compiled to indicate the qualities in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes which a competent teacher educator should possess. It may be that a detailed taxonomy would be inappropriate or extremely complex, for it would need to cover the multiple roles of the teacher educator as teacher, lecturer, guide, facilitator, initiator, collaborator, supervisor, assessor, counsellor, and so on. Training should be adapted, too, to take into account the specialism of the individual teacher educator within the education system; this may be for example, in administrative, academic or professional

matters, theory or practice. One common function of the training, however, should be to reduce the barriers separating different types of teacher educator, in the hope of building attitudes conducive to the development of cooperative and coordinated activities in the teacher education process. Such an approach would give the student a more cohesive course, limiting the possibility that compartmentalised instruction given by different members of the teaching staff would result in a disjointed overall experience.

The teacher educator, like the teacher, must possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable him to work with confidence. Among his desirable attributes there have been listed mastery of the subjects of his specialism, skills in counselling and human relations (including the winning of the trust of his students), the power to appraise innovation critically and engender vision and foresight in his students, and a deep awareness of the responsibility with which he is entrusted. For him to acquire the capacity to carry out these responsibilities, the new teacher educator requires orientation and the development of increased sensitivities. In his new role he may well find his direct authority less than in the post from which he has come, and he must be helped to acquire new techniques of teaching by example and persuasion.

The orientation course would be expected to include an analysis of national development aims and the relationship of education to them; the role and function of teacher education with respect to the student and the community; an introduction to social relations in adult groups, including decision theory, leadership techniques and sensitivity training; and the theory and practice of adult learning, with sufficient facility in the areas of measurement and evaluation to enable the teacher educator to understand new developments. Each new educator in his first year should have a lighter than normal load so that he has adequate time to prepare his material and visit other teacher education activities.

First among his studies should be that of the methods of teaching adults because some of his students may well be more mature and experienced than himself. In acquiring these skills he must establish a pattern which will enable him to reconcile the way in which he is teaching his students with the way in which he hopes his students will learn to teach; the underlying approach may be the same but the implementation must vary with the stage of maturity of the learner. With his own students he must learn to handle group situations using group dynamics and mutual reinforcement.

Essentially, the training programme for the teacher educator should be designed to promote his own professional rediscovery and regeneration as he enters a new area of educational endeavour. His induction course must help him to establish his standards and norms and encourage his professional growth through extended study and research.

The process should be ongoing, backed by structured in-service provision. In-service courses can help to revitalise the flagging teacher educator, especially if they are designed to bring together different types of teacher educator from institutions, inspectorial, advisory and administrative duties. Something is to be gained, too, from periodic consultations among educators working in different types of education and at different levels. In-service provision may take the form of workshops, seminars, conferences, study leaves or vacation courses, and might be reinforced by the use of the media and correspondence techniques, as well as such facilities as may be made available by professional associations.

The concept of a staff college for key personnel might be further explored. Such a college might have its own building or might operate through a small secretariat and use different institutional accommodation from time to time for its courses. A staff college might help to meet the problem of training for senior staff and key personnel as well as contributing to the unity of the profession, particularly by helping to break down the divisions between inspectors and advisors on the one hand and lecturers on the other. Principals and administrators could benefit from specially tailored courses, as could middle-level and senior staff from other forms of teacher education, technical, non-formal and specialist. The permanent staff of a staff college could also undertake the collection and dissemination of material relating to in-service teacher education at that level. Such a college would complement the courses now being provided by some universities.

Anticipating needs

Few courses for teacher educators exist, but in planning to extend the present provision care must be taken not to construct courses which may be obsolete before they are implemented. In an increasing number of countries, for example, the concept of the teacher as a community worker has implications for teacher education which must be incorporated into training for teacher educators. Another factor, especially in developing countries, is the likely rise in quality and academic standard of student teachers over the coming years. As the quality of intake into teacher training improves, so teacher educators will need to change the style and content of their work. The rate of change in this case can be forecast with some precision and it would seem desirable for national strategies to be formulated with a minimum of delay to anticipate events. One possible development would be the establishment at an early stage of training facilities for the higher echelon key personnel in teacher education, including inspection and administration, who will have to implement the upgrading programme for teacher educators. This could be usefully linked into the concept of a staff college.

Study for a higher degree is not necessarily the best form of preparation for teacher educators. In most cases the emphasis on original research means that the higher degree student concentrates on acquiring research techniques rather than developing a range of skills and experience likely to be of practical use in the exercise of his profession. It may be that the need could better be met if higher level teacher educators are given the opportunity to obtain postgraduate qualifications by choosing blocks of study from a range of disciplines. By the careful selection of specific elements and the variety of the experiences gained, a more adequate preparation might result than from a standard higher degree course. While the question of a formal qualification upon the completion of such a course would arise, ways could be devised to cope with this and there would be merit in examining how some current scholarship programmes intended for teacher educators could be made more flexible to accommodate this need. The award of a recognised qualification in return for continued professional improvement should be accepted as a reasonable expectation and a powerful motivation.

In considering future development it appears desirable to explore means by which greater cohesion can be achieved nationally among those engaged in teacher education and more effective exchanges of experience organised on a regional and international basis. The concept of a staff college may be of relevance to these purposes, as may the idea of tutors'

associations, both of which could cater for the many different types of teacher educator. The exchange of information, perhaps on a regular basis through the exchange of journals, might also be considered. (Such exchanges might be facilitated by use of the proposed Commonwealth Exchange Voucher Scheme). Means should be sought to break down the compartmentalising of teacher education functions and the isolating of various interested groups and individuals. By these various means the way may be opened for teacher educators to develop their individual approaches to their work with a freedom limited only by the need to follow a generally agreed policy. Greater expertise among teacher educators and the demonstration of continuing professional interest during their career would enhance their image among their academic colleagues and the teaching force at large; the introduction of a system whereby those working in various areas of education could interchange for limited periods would be a particularly valuable contribution to increased mutual respect between teachers and teacher educators.

In terms of specific action, the following items may be of particular advantage in a Commonwealth context:

- (a) a study by each country of problems and procedures in the preparation of teacher educators, followed by the exchange of findings among member countries;
- (b) action-oriented research, possibly on an interdisciplinary, international basis, into the role of the teacher educator, the knowledge and skills required to carry out this role, and the best means for providing him with these attributes.