

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHER EDUCATION

Plenary Session

Mr. A.L. Jones presented Mr. Stanley Vivian's paper. He drew attention to the seven main areas covered, and commented on them. He pointed out that the paper illustrated the very encouraging variety of devices which were being used to produce more and better teachers and noted that societies were not being de-schooled but schools were being changed by a process of re-schooling mainly by new thinking among teacher-educators.

Referring to the section on The Teacher and the Community, he pointed out that the old methods were not necessarily bad and warned against the view that all change is good. On the wider role of the teacher, he explained that a more complex role was more demanding on the teacher and could lead to conflicts in the school and in teachers themselves.

He stressed the view that teachers should work more closely together because isolation in the classroom could be a bad thing. But such co-ordination was very demanding on teachers.

He continued by considering the active role of the pupil in the learning process which was very important. However, this meant that children were not simply doing as they were told and it required an appreciation that they had a point of view which deserved attention and respect. This involved considerable re-orientation in the role of the teacher and perhaps more than many teachers could manage. Mr. Jones agreed that a more varied approach to learning was required but the re-orientation of teachers was again very demanding.

Commenting on the increased involvement of teachers in curriculum development, Mr. Jones pointed out that this was an essential feature of in-service education.

On the individualization of learning materials, he emphasized that the production of materials required a great deal of time and effort and he gave illustrations of this.

Finally, he questioned the feasibility of every school having equipment such as an overhead projector, a radio, a cassette recorder and a duplicating machine. Although teachers were increasingly using such teaching aids, and were producing their own materials for this purpose, many schools were still without adequate essential facilities and thus over-emphasis in this area was perhaps unrealistic.

In the discussion which followed there was wide appreciation of the value of the ideas illustrated in Mr. Vivian's paper and considerable sympathy with the cautionary comments made by Mr. A.L. Jones.

The first matter discussed was the reconciliation of the innovation with an educational system which taught the syllabus and examined students in traditional ways. It was pointed out that examinations should be used as a tool of curriculum development; examinations should be seen as a means of assessing performance in a course which aimed to meet clear objectives. The

examination should be used to encourage teachers to meet the objectives of the course.

It was emphasized that the curriculum should be developed as a team effort and teachers had a wide variety of essential contributions to make such as sharing in curriculum development and drafting and editing teaching materials. In Kenya, it was explained, selected teachers were seconded to the Institute of Education for some months to work on the production of materials.

It was stressed that it was desirable for teachers to go into other teachers' classrooms and to work together even though this was very difficult to implement.

Concern was expressed that the teachers were not only being urged to accept a considerable re-orientation in their role but were also being expected to do more than in the past and take wider responsibilities. For example, it was pointed out that curriculum development was a demanding field of study in itself and required theoretical training. Because participation in curriculum development helped teachers to become more aware of the need for change, they should be expected to play a part in the process though it was probably unrealistic to assume they would have the time or inclination to play a substantial role.

The importance of the teacher's role in the community was widely accepted and it was pointed out that in many countries the teacher's interaction was already very considerable.

Several speakers stressed the importance of not assuming that all change was good and explained that the value of change should be assessed in terms of the changes in the way of life of all people in a country.

On the wider role of the teacher, it was pointed out that most countries suffered an acute shortage of teachers and thus teachers could be expected to do new things in a limited way because they were already overworked.

Group Sessions

At this stage, participants divided into groups and tackled the assignments printed below.

ASSIGNMENT 1

List the advantages and disadvantages of the following alternative procedures in in-service teacher education:

- (a) Face to face or at a distance.
- (b) College based or school based.
- (c) Continuous courses of a year or more or sandwich courses.
- (d) A general course combining an educational component together with professional training or purely competency based training.
- (e) Training in a monotechnic institution or training in a polytechnic.
- (f) Training for teachers only or training for all personnel involved in the education of children (eg. administrators, school librarians, teacher aides, etc.).
- (g) Comprehensive teacher colleges providing all types of training or specialist teachers colleges concentrating on one kind of training such as physical education, technical education, aesthetic education or training of teachers for village schools.

ASSIGNMENT 2

Study the description of Nobilongwa given below. The Educational administrators' group should attempt to list the main priorities in planning facilities for training teachers for Nobilongwa. The teacher educators group should determine five important new measures in aspects of teacher education to meet the needs of Nobilongwa, providing as much detail of course design and content as possible.

Nobilongwa

Nobilongwa is a country that has everything: mountains, lowlands, desert and jungle. Its climate is tropical. Malaria affects only the eastern districts where a minority of the population live. Natural resources are believed to be rich but are not much exploited so far. There is a well established railway system serving the southern districts but transport in the rest of the country is by road (most of it untarred) or, in parts, by river. Many roads become impassable in the wet season. A well developed postal and telephone system serves the main urban centres but letters may take 3 or 4 weeks to reach some places. Five main vernacular languages are spoken. English is the official language.

Over half the population is under 15 years of age. Rapid development of education has achieved school places for about 40% of the children of primary school age but over half of these children have no school furniture of any kind. Text books and other teaching materials are sufficient to supply, for instance, one copy of an officially prescribed text book for every 2 or 3 children. There is great regional variation in the availability of school facilities. For example, in the northern parts only 10% of the eligible children can find a school place but in the capital city almost 100% of the children can attend well-equipped schools.

Only a small minority of children can get into secondary schools. Primary education, therefore, is terminal for most children. Adult literacy is about 30%.

A vigorous programme of industrialization is being pursued and many foreign firms are being encouraged to set up a base in the country. But meanwhile the large majority of the people earn their living by subsistence farming.

About 60% of the primary school teachers are completely untrained and most of them have had only 2 years of secondary schooling. The secondary schools are staffed by college-trained teachers and some graduates (who leave teaching as soon as they can get a better-paid job in industry, commerce or the civil service) and about 50% are expatriates on 2 year contracts. Only 20% of these renew their contracts.

The government has announced a radical new philosophy for the country and the education service is charged with the duty of spreading it through the population as quickly as possible.

Teachers have been trained in the traditional "concurrent" way for nearly 100 years and many of the colleges are highly respected. Increasingly the staff of these institutions are young, inexperienced graduates. Many of them have had higher education overseas (USA, UK, USSR, etc.)

The school inspectorate is staffed by dedicated men (and a very small number of women) most of whom are near the end of their careers. New recruits to the inspectorate are drawn from the graduates who staff the secondary school

and teachers' training colleges. Despite their efforts to project an image as "advisers" the inspectors are generally regarded by teachers with fear and suspicion. If a teacher is absent from his class unlawfully - having a quiet beer at home, perhaps, during school hours - he knows that he will be punished if an inspector catches him.

Recently a new primary curriculum has been adopted containing English language through a "functional" approach; modern mathematics and a social studies syllabus which includes an element designed to increase equality between men and women.

The Director of Education is a well-qualified man of great experience who has just been appointed to UNESCO in Paris. The Principal of the oldest and largest teachers' training college has recently retired and three ambitious men are competing for his post. A foreign government has offered 10 scholarships for higher studies overseas.

Within the past two years the education service has been beset with several special problems; a proposal for mixed male and female accommodation at a teachers' college led to local protests and one hostel was burned down; the known number of unmarried school girls becoming pregnant has doubled in two years; a group of young teachers refused to serve in a remote rural district and staged a protest march and sit-in at the Ministry of Education. They were eventually evicted by the police and three of them were arrested.

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSION - ASSIGNMENT 1

Both groups examined the variety of approaches to teacher education suggested in the assignment and drew the following conclusions:

1. Face to face or at a distance

(a) Face to face instruction has the advantage of:

- facilitating communication
- permitting a two way exchange of ideas
- allowing the personality of the tutor to influence the learning process
- enabling the tutor to offer close guidance and supervision to his students
- making demonstration possible
- allowing the optimum use of fixed resources such as the library, laboratory, etc.
- providing immediate feedback thus enabling difficulties to be dealt with right away
- allowing the tutor to motivate his students more easily than at a distance
- encouraging a co-operative approach to learning
- enabling teaching media to be matched to the particular needs of the student.

(b) However face to face instruction can have the disadvantage of:

- putting the teacher in a dominating role with the student filling a purely passive role.
- "spoon feeding" the student

- limiting the student to whatever the teaching resources may be even when these are very poor;
- adversely affecting learning if inter-personal relations are bad;
- being more expensive.

(c) Teaching at a distance has the advantage of:

- placing greater responsibility for learning on the student and, therefore, for encouraging initiative and commitment;
- permitting a small staff to teach a large number of students;
- preventing the possibility of any personality clash between a student and his tutor;
- being generally less costly than face to face instruction;
- enabling students to hold a job at the same time as they follow their course of study;
- allowing a student to proceed at his own pace.

(e) On the other hand teaching at a distance can have the disadvantage of:

- interfering with two-way communication between tutor and student including feedback;
- developing in the student a feeling of isolation and loneliness;
- requiring very strong self-discipline in the student;
- making some kinds of instruction extremely difficult;
- being interrupted by a system of communication, such as the postal system over which the tutor has no control.

2. College based or school based training

(a) The advantages of college based training are that:

- it has all the advantages of face to face teaching;
- it usually provides more resources such as the library, micro-teaching facilities and a better environment for study than may be available in the student's school;
- it offers in a relatively relaxed environment the opportunity to discuss with other minds the issues being studied;
- it is easier to supervise the students' work;
- it brings to the student through the hidden curriculum a wider learning experience than individual study does;
- it allows a core curriculum with a variety of options to be studied;
- it carries a certain amount of prestige that school based training does not.

(b) The disadvantages of college based training are that:

- the accommodation available puts strict limits on the number of students that can be trained and may lead to deserving students being denied training;
- courses tend to be longer and therefore to cover a smaller number of people;
- the facilities offered in the college may be unrealistically generous in comparison with what exists in the schools thus making training irrelevant.

(c) The advantages of school based study are that:

- teachers are not removed from their classes while learning;
- it allows much larger numbers of students to be trained simultaneously and often in a shorter time;
- it enables the teacher to test immediately in practice what he is learning;
- it provides a realistic environment for the student to learn about teaching.

(d) The main disadvantages of school based study are that:

- the student teacher may be too overwhelmed by his routine work to have enough time for his studies;
- resources may be fewer and less appropriate than those offered in the college;
- the student may feel isolated and see much less of his tutor than in college.

3. Continuous long courses or sandwich courses

(a) The advantages of the long uninterrupted training course are that:

- it gives continuity;
- it enables issues to be studied more thoroughly and at greater depth than in short courses;
- slow learners have a chance of catching up before the course ends.

(b) On the other hand, there are disadvantages which include:

- the necessity to provide a replacement for a teacher who leaves the classroom for a year-long study course;
- the greater cost of training where staff replacement and residential accommodation are involved;
- the fact that students must assimilate a whole course before they can put it into practice.

(c) Sandwich courses offer certain advantages such as:

- enabling the student to test out in his school what he learns in the college as soon as it is learned;
- overcoming in most cases the need to provide a replacement for the student taken out of teaching by his study course;
- providing earlier feedback from students to tutors than long courses can, thus enabling the tutor to modify the course as necessary.

(d) The main disadvantages of sandwich courses are that:

- they interfere with continuity in teaching;
- they present a bigger problem for providing replacement staff where this is necessary because it is generally easier to find a staffing replacement for a full year than for a series of short-term engagements;
- they tend to make the contact with students too intermittent for useful relationships to develop.

4. General Teacher Training or Competency Based Training

(a) The advantages of a general course are that:

- it offers more possibilities for integration of the training programme;
- it provides a broader education for the student;
- it enables general education and professional training to be conducted so that they complement each other.
- it offers the chance of making the student more adaptable to curriculum change.

(b) The disadvantages of a general course are that:

- it tends to over-train the student and thus be inefficient;
- it takes a long time.

(c) The advantages of competency based training are that:

- it makes efficient use of limited resources by offering training only in the skills the student will actually require in his next teaching post;
- it coincides with a time when the student is likely to be well motivated;
- it is easy to evaluate.

(d) The disadvantages of competency based training are that:

- because it produces teachers with a limited range of skills, it reduces the flexibility with which teachers can be posted to teaching jobs;
- it may fail to help teachers integrate the separate competencies into effective teaching.

5. Monotechnic or Polytechnic Institutions for Training Teachers

(a) Monotechnic teacher training colleges have some advantages such as the fact that:

- they are able to concentrate all their resources on one task;
- they can attract well qualified and experienced staff;
- teaching can be thorough.

(b) However, they suffer from the disadvantage of:

- not catering for the student who does not know whether he will like teaching and who, if he leaves the teaching profession early in his career, will waste his years of specialized training;
- providing a narrow curriculum which, by itself, is insufficient for enabling teachers to prepare children for the realities of life and employment.

(c) The polytechnic has training advantages in that:

- it gives a broad based education that is of use to students who may not become teachers;

- it encourages intellectual and social exchange between students training for different careers.

(d) The polytechnic however suffers from the fact that:

- it has to spread its resources more widely than a monotechinic institution;
- it is so big that individual students can become anonymous.

6. Colleges for Teachers only or for all Kinds of Educational Personnel

(a) There are advantages in specializing in the training of teachers only in that:

- fewer personnel and resources are required;
- the strong professional commitment of a specialized staff creates a favourable environment for the training of the student.

(b) However a disadvantage is that:

- necessary training may not be provided for auxiliary school personnel.

(c) Comprehensive provision for the training of all educational personnel together has the advantage of:

- ensuring that all the people involved in the formal system of education receive some training for the job they are expected to do.

(d) On the other hand there is a disadvantage in that:

- the administrative organization is much more demanding because training will probably have to be provided in a variety of languages as well as at different levels and in different skills.

7. Comprehensive or Specialist Teacher Training Colleges

(a) The advantage of the comprehensive teachers' college which prepares teachers for a wide range of teaching tasks throughout the education system is that:

- it makes teachers better able to take on a variety of jobs;
- it facilitates curriculum development as, for example, making the integration of subjects easier to bring about.

(b) The disadvantage is that:

- it tends to turn students into 'Jacks of all trades and masters of none'.

(c) The advantage of the specialist college is that:

- it can conduct studies to a greater depth;
- prepare students better for the specific task they will perform as teachers.

- (d) But the disadvantage is that such a college
- tends to prepare teachers whose employment flexibility is very limited;
 - produces teachers who have less appreciation of other aspects of education;
 - tends to overlook the basic common knowledge that is of value to all teachers.

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSION - ASSIGNMENT 2

The educational administrators' group then examined the information given about the imaginary country of Nabilongwa and decided on the following priorities listed in order of importance:

- (a) Foster national consciousness within the national objectives of the education system.
- (b) Review the existing educational goals.
- (c) Provide technical teacher education facilities.
- (d) Develop family life and health education programmes.
- (e) Establish training facilities for administrators (particularly educational managers).
- (f) Increase the provision of adult education.
- (g) Create tertiary education for teachers.
- (h) Award ten scholarships as follows:
 - two for technical teacher education
 - two for management
 - two for agricultural and rural development
 - one for family life education
 - one for adult education
 - two for tertiary education for teachers

The teacher educators' group recommended the following action in Nabilongwa:

- (a) Reduce primary schooling to 4 years. This would expose more pupils to contact with the small number of qualified teachers.
- (b) Initiate an in-service programme to train the large numbers of unqualified teachers.
- (c) Train technical subject teachers.
- (d) Change teachers' attitudes to inspectors so that they can be used in the teacher in-service education programme.
- (e) Appoint counterparts to understudy inspectors that are near retiring.

(f) Introduce citizenship education for both pupils and teachers.

(g) Provide incentives for teachers to move to the rural areas.

(h) Increase secondary schools so that the numbers of those who qualify to become teachers can be increased.