

NEEDS AND PRIORITIES IN IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Determining needs

A realistic assessment of the educational situation having been made, the most urgent development needs, both quantitative and qualitative, become clear. It may, for example, be that the education provided for children in the lower primary grades is of a very formal and authoritarian type allowing little scope for young children's creative and imaginative activities. The remedies may well be varied, such as smaller classes, more and better reading texts, materials for creative play, number apparatus and so on - but all depending for their effective use on the re-training of the teachers concerned or, in the case of unqualified staff, on their initial training.

Thus, if a policy decision were to be taken that the first priority in in-service training for the next three years should be the upgrading of the professional competence of all teachers of the first three primary grades, a detailed planning exercise would then have to be undertaken to translate this major aim into a practical programme within the resources likely to be available. (Factors to be taken into account in such planning are considered later under "resources").

Formulating objectives

From a professional viewpoint the general aim already decided on must be broken down into a number of specific and clearly stated objectives for the course, or series of courses, to be undertaken. In this way the various elements which go to make up the desired improved professional expertise can be identified. This will be of great assistance to those called on to organize and teach on in-service courses and will also provide criteria for evaluating the

effectiveness of the courses both in the shorter and longer term.

Planning
appropriate
kinds of
courses

In his study of "In-Service Teacher Training in English-Speaking Africa", carried out in 1967-1968, Graham Trevaskis notes that, in the 13 countries surveyed, it is possible to identify courses initiated to achieve 7 major objectives, as follows:

- (a) Initial training for unqualified teachers.
- (b) Upgrading professional qualifications.
- (c) Implementing curriculum change.
- (d) Developing and evaluating curriculum materials.
- (e) Developing professional skills.
- (f) Improving administration and supervision.
- (g) Orienting participants to new responsibilities.

Trevaskis' detailed analysis makes clear that a wide variety of course patterns have been developed in pursuit of these major objectives. This is to be expected bearing in mind the varying local conditions and the absence of any established structure for in-service teacher training comparable to that which exists for pre-service training in most countries.

It is, however, clear that the first two of the major objectives are in a rather different category from the others, and in two respects. The objectives themselves are very broad and in practice must include, as suggested earlier, a number of more limited specific objectives; and consequently the courses developed to achieve those broad objectives are usually long-term, rarely less than one year and often stretching over three years or more. Whereas in earlier years, such courses have often been full-time and residential, and extravagant in

money and staff, more recently, with the much larger number of teachers involved, they have tended to take on the pattern of a series of short residential vacation courses together with correspondence assignments and sometimes radio broadcasts. (See "Modes of training"). The importance of clear and realistic definitions of objectives for such courses is well illustrated in the case of the Nigerian "Teachers' In-Service Programme" of recent years * where, not only would it appear that the capacity of the majority of the teachers involved to profit from the planned programme had been over-estimated, but, more important, the goals set and the means used to assess the work of the teachers were, in retrospect, seen to have been inappropriate. It might, therefore, be advisable, wherever practicable, for a large-scale in-service programme, even when carefully planned, as in the Nigerian case, to be preceded by a smaller-scale "trial run". In this way unforeseen difficulties might be brought to light and appropriate action taken. Staff would also have the opportunity of trying out and revising their programmes as necessary.

Courses geared to the other five objectives noted by Trevaskis would seem for the most part to have been likely to be much shorter in duration, ranging from one half-day to about a month, although not always taken in one block. Where this has been the case, experience suggests that it is essential for the objectives to be both strictly limited and closely related to the current work of the teachers in their schools.

Consider, for example, the need to introduce primary school teachers for the first time to

* Aleyideino, S.C. and Hawes, H.W.R.
"TISEP: A well planned in-service
programme that didn't quite work".
Teacher Education in New Countries.
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an environmental studies approach through a new curriculum. The objective, stated in such broad terms, for one five-day course for 50 teachers of different primary grades, might all too well result in a generalized programme of lectures illustrated by reference to the new curriculum and to the materials, such as teachers' guides which, one would hope, had already been prepared and tried out in a sample of the schools. How effective such a course would be in terms of the teacher's approach in his classroom is open to doubt.

On the other hand the objective stated in such terms as "to give teachers of primary grade 4 first-hand experience of a local environmental study in such a way as to prepare them for similar work with their pupils as part of the new curriculum" might well produce interesting and useful results, more particularly if a series of short local follow-up courses were possible so as to provide the essential interaction between course and classroom.

The temptation, for worthy enough reasons, to attempt too much, on too broad a front, in a short period must be resisted. The principle of limitation certainly should apply in the case of our objectives c-g, more especially where, as is so often the case, time, staff and money are themselves limited.