

MODES OF TRAINING

The variety
of patterns

In recent years a large variety of types of in-service courses have been devised in many countries to meet a wide range of needs and conditions as economically as possible. It is therefore difficult to suggest any simple classification of in-service courses. How does one define a "short" course? And may not an in-service "project" or "programme" be made up of a variety of different elements - "short" and "long" courses; weekend conferences; radio study groups; correspondence assignments and so on?

It is therefore only for the purpose of convenience of discussion that the following main types are suggested:

- (a) Short courses
 - (i) One off
 - (ii) Serial
- (b) Long courses or projects
 - (i) Continuous
 - (ii) Serial

One off
short courses

These courses tend to be the most numerous, being brief in duration, relatively cheap to run, and requiring no complicated organization. They may last anything from half a day to 3 or 4 weeks and may be residential or not according to local circumstances. The main feature of this type of course, as indicated by its "one-off" label, is that it is intended to be complete in itself and does not necessarily lead on to any further training for those concerned.

Such courses in earlier years were commonly referred to as "refresher" or "improvement" courses, intended to "brush-up" teachers' knowledge or techniques in particular subject areas. More recently they have been devoted very largely to introducing fairly large groups to new subject syllabuses and materials as part of major curriculum development programmes. In either case such courses must set themselves strictly limited and practical objectives if they are to have any outcome in terms of better classroom performance. This point emerges clearly from the Montserrat case study.

Serial short courses

The essential feature of the serial-type course is that it is broken up into a number of usually fairly short segments and spread over as long as a term or even a year. The segments need not be of the same length. For example, a course for a group of teachers concerned with introductory science in the first year of the secondary school, might begin, in a holiday period, with a 3-day block, go on to a series of 10 weekly half-day sessions during the term, and finish with another 3-day block during the next holiday period. A similar purpose might be met by a series of 10 Saturday morning sessions, in this case not involving any release of the teachers during school time.

The main advantage of this kind of arrangement is the close and continuing relationship which is possible between the course and the teaching/learning situation in the schools, thus giving the project clear purpose and relevance. Such "courses" are likely to develop a strong "workshop" approach with a good deal of teacher participation and feed-back from the classroom.

In practice, however, serial-type courses are only practicable where it is possible for a sufficient number of teachers to get regularly to the chosen centre without having to spend a lot of time in travel. One teacher in Uganda, however, known to the author, travelled fifty

miles each way at his own expense every Saturday morning during term time to attend a course at the Institute of Education. Day release programmes can thus be effective in fairly large urban centres; and Saturday or weekend courses in compact rural areas and where transport is available. It is in such situations that the local Teachers' Centre - even when it is only a spare room in a centrally located school - comes into its own as a focus for a variety of activities aimed at promoting teachers' professional understanding and skills.

Continuous long courses

The longer type of continuous course, lasting for one or two years was an early feature of the in-service training scene in a number of countries and is still by no means uncommon.

Courses of this nature have as their purpose the upgrading to qualified status of untrained teachers, or the further education and training of already qualified teachers. In Uganda, for example, between 1953 and 1960 some 400 "vernacular grade" teachers were upgraded to full primary teacher status as a result of one-year courses in which particular emphasis was given to the teachers' own competence in the English language and the teaching of this subject. During the same period some 200 specially selected and fully qualified primary teachers also followed upgrading courses of the same length which were aimed at helping them to teach in the junior secondary schools. The Uganda Education Commission, reporting in 1963, condemned this latter type of course as depriving the primary schools of their most skilled and experienced teachers. At a later date, with the growth of secondary-level teacher training, this course was discontinued.

Chief characteristics of continuous long courses

Long courses of this type generally display some of the following characteristics:

- (a) Their objectives are broad rather than limited and specific. The teacher's personal education as well as his professional ability is included in the

course and the whole school curriculum is studied, discussed and tested in practical exercises.

(b) They require full-time staff, either in a designated in-service college or centre or in a teachers' college which is taking on such an in-service commitment in addition to its normal pre-service work.

(c) They are residential.

(d) The teachers concerned have to be replaced in their schools, very possibly by temporary, untrained staff.

(e) They are expensive, for the reasons already indicated and also because the teachers probably continue to receive their normal salaries during the period of the course.

Courses of this kind, whilst probably continuing to have a part to play in a national in-service training programme, can only cater for relatively small numbers of teachers at a time and are tending to be replaced by the more economical "serial" type in-service project.

Chief characteristics of long serial and project courses

Further accounts of this type of in-service programmes are to be found in the case studies on Uganda and Swaziland.

It will thus suffice here to suggest what are likely to be the main features of such projects.

(a) There is usually a full-time, face-to-face training period (normally residential) broken up into a series of three or more fairly short periods of three to six weeks each. These may be in the school holidays only or continued throughout the year. If they are continued beyond holidays, full-time staff and accommodation are required, thus adding considerably to the cost.

- (b) In between their residential courses, the teachers may continue with their normal teaching duties but, at the same time, work on a set of correspondence assignments to which they have already been introduced on their course.
- (c) They may listen to regular radio broadcasts directed to them and intended to keep alive their interest in the on-going programme.
- (d) They may also receive from time to time a project "Newsletter" to which they themselves are invited to contribute.
- (e) They are visited in their schools by their project tutors whose task is to advise and help them in all possible ways to apply their training in the realities of the classroom situation. Such visits from project tutors are really possible only if they are full-time in-service staff for enormous practical problems develop if they are only part-time staff.
- (f) Both during and at the end of the training period, the teachers are assessed by written tests (including assignment grades) and in practical teaching. If successful, they then receive the appropriate qualification.