

FOLLOW-UP

The case
for follow -
up

"The provision for in-service training may be excellent and the arrangements beyond reproach, but it can still be ineffective if the opportunities for teachers to apply the training in their school work are very limited or non-existent. Staff may soon forget the new methods or the alternative approaches if difficult circumstances, lack of equipment, or lack of encouragement prevent them from putting the training into practice." *

This comment, written in the context of Britain in the late 1960s, could be just as true - even more so - for those countries with less highly developed educational systems and therefore less chance of providing the conditions necessary for effective follow-through from in-service courses to the classroom situation. A Jamaican primary school headmaster writes: "The successes on the courses are only superficial. Very little or nothing is done to ensure that the teachers' experiences are conveyed to the classroom situation the courses are a temporary break from the classroom and materials to revert to his old, often irrelevant experiences." It is perhaps unnecessary to state the obvious: that in-service training is only a means to an end - better teaching, and thus better learning. In this connection it would seem clear that the less well educated and professionally qualified a teacher is the more help and encouragement he is likely to need

* Cane, B.
In-Service Training.
National Foundation for
Educational Research, 1969.

"on-the-job" after - or in the process of - involvement in an in-service training programme.

The purpose of follow-up

The first purpose of any follow-up exercise is thus to achieve the maximum possible "carry-over" from course to classroom; helping the teacher to apply what he has learnt and experienced in the particular circumstances of his school.

The second is to provide reliable "feedback" on the adequacy of the course programme itself, leading to re-examination and revision as suggested by experience in his schools.

Problems of follow-up

In the context of many developing countries the follow-up phase of an in-service programme frequently presents many intractable problems. The need is clearly seen, but the means are rarely available in any adequate measure.

The main problems and difficulties, varying in nature and degree from country to country, and from urban to rural areas, are likely to be:

(a) Poor physical conditions in the schools - especially primary schools: excessive size of classes; temporary and insecure buildings; lack of storage facilities; shortages of furniture, equipment and school materials, including books.

(b) The physical and thus the professional isolation of many teachers in rural areas.

(c) Difficulties of communication between school and the main educational centres, either in personal contacts or through the printed word or mass media.

(d) Shortages of supervisory staff, transport and finance.

Ideally specific provision for the follow-up element of an in-service teacher training project should be built in at the planning stage. In practice, however, it is rarely possible to do this except in the case of major long-term programmes, particularly where these are made up of a series of unit courses. More commonly ad hoc efforts to make a course effective have to be resorted to. In general the methods of follow-up which may be available fall into two main categories: those external to the school itself and those located "in-school".

Follow-up
at the
personal
level

Advisory help may come to a school from outside in a variety of ways. At the personal level this will usually take the form of advisory visits by inspectors as part of their regular programme of work. However, the inspectors may not always be familiar with the objectives and nature of an in-service project, especially if it lies outside their own particular subject interest. In any case, time is a limiting factor and inspectors have a variety of duties to perform, and usually more schools to supervise than they can easily give full attention to. (It is not uncommon for an inspector to have 100 or more primary schools in his charge).

There may be circumstances - as with the "New Primary Approach" in Kenya in the 1960s or the early years of the "Zambia English Medium Programme" - in which a special corps of supervisors is considered essential to the effective implementation of a new educational programme. The difficulty is usually to find, and make available, suitable staff for such a purpose, and to retain them for a sufficiently long period.

Ideally, the people who should provide the follow-up advisory support are the members of the in-service course staff, but this is not always possible. Expatriate tutors frequently employed on short Teachers' Vacation Courses have extremely limited opportunity for any follow-up of their work although even a little

may be helpful as mentioned in Case Study 1. Where campaigns or programmes are staffed by teachers or college tutors during their vacations, it is equally clear that they will be too fully occupied with their other duties during term time to visit schools and help teachers. Full-time in-service staff are, of course, in a much better position to carry out this essential task, provided that provision for it in time and money is built into the programme as was the case in Case Study 6.

Follow-up by advisory personnel

It may be asked just how a teacher can be helped by visits from supervisory staff. Much will depend on individual circumstances and on the degree to which the teacher is aware of the kind of help he needs. In general, the adviser - so long as he is not acting in a traditional inspectorial capacity - can discuss his problems with the teacher; see him at work; remove misunderstanding; advise on preparation of lesson units, learning and teaching aids and suitable class organization; clarify his suggestions by demonstration; seek the understanding and support of the headmaster for the teacher's work and in many other ways. What matters most, perhaps, is the quality of the relationship established in such a way as to give the teacher positive help, encouragement and confidence.

Follow-up meetings

In addition to - or sometimes instead of - individual school advisory visits, local groups of teachers from a number of schools may be brought together at a convenient centre such as a teacher's centre for a half or one-day follow-up meeting. Depending on need, this may have the characteristics of a short course with demonstrations, a workshop, conference, discussion group or a combination of these. The particular advantage of such an arrangement is clearly the opportunity for teachers to meet and exchange experiences and ideas in the setting of their own locality and preferably in one of their own schools.

Follow-up
within the
school

Outside help for the teacher cannot always be relied on. Travel may be difficult or impossible; postal services erratic. What can the school do to help itself? Often, it must be confessed, in the deprived situation in which it finds itself, not very much. And yet a start can often be made, even if only in a small way.

The role of
the headteacher
in follow-up

Much depends on the headteacher and his capacity to fulfil an in-service function in his school. The key importance of the headteacher was noted in the study of primary education made in Sukumaland, Tanzania in the mid-1960s.* It is reflected also in the increasing provision made for primary headteachers in in-service courses, for example in Kenya, Nigeria, Botswana, Lesotho and elsewhere. Such further training can help the head to consider how he can assist his staff to make the best use of their own in-service training experiences. Interest, encouragement, and help with materials are the more obvious ways. Some supervision, suggestion and perhaps demonstration may also be appropriate. And, if he is to be really helpful, the headteacher must take the trouble to familiarize himself with the aims and content of the courses his teachers have attended. Where major new curriculum developments are in progress the head himself should be personally involved in the re-training process - perhaps with the whole of his staff as in the case of the most recent phase of the Durham-Lesotho in-service training programme described in Case Study 1.

The needs of
the headteacher
as a
professional
adviser

In this context the headteacher becomes a professional adviser. But if he is to be effective, he not only needs further training, his status needs to be more explicitly recognized. He needs some release from what is often a full-

* Primary Education in Sukumaland, Tanzania,
Wolters-Noordhoff Publishing,
Groningen, 1969.

time teaching commitment, and more continuity in his post than is frequently the case. In addition he will need the full support and help of his local inspector and education officer. Nothing is likely to do more to improve the quality of education, especially in the primary schools, than the building up of a corps of professionally competent and dedicated head-teachers accorded the status that is their due.